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Current Books from professors and students of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus (Center for Urban Ministerial Education) are interspersed throughout the Journal.

Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an academic, multilingual journal. Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, based on the Boston campus (the Center for Urban Ministerial Education [CUME]).
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way).

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who are in a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D. program or have a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D., Ed.D., or equivalent degree.

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"I am eternally grateful to the Africanus Guild, which has helped me fulfill God's call and realize a personal dream. I could not be working on my PhD in Old Testament without the financial help, prayers, and educational support I receive through the Guild."

—QUONEKUA DAY

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Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around A.D. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around A.D. 231–233. In A.D. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (ANF 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

Other Front Matter

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Summary of Content

This issue examines holistic African American theology, spiritual formation for the urban Latino American, a historical review of Christianity among the Mongols of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, followed by a poem by the same author. The Greco-Roman backgrounds of Paul’s Aeropogus speech in Acts 17 are considered, along with a final article on whether evangelicals are engaging the right issues related to “family values.” The issue concludes with several book reviews.

Keepers of The Faith: Toward an African American Holistic Christian Theology

GLENN L. CAMPBELL

Four decades have passed since James H. Cone began the theological task of relating the Gospel message to the political, social, and cultural milieu of African American Christianity in his book *A Black Theology of Liberation*. In this seminal work, Cone developed his theology based on a reading of Scripture through the lens of liberation as the central interpretive motif. He writes, “Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ.”¹ Despite his theology being critiqued inside and outside of the African American theological community, Cone provided a much needed corrective to the theological enterprise, in particular evangelical theology. Cone reminds us to rethink theology from the standpoint of the poor and oppressed.

Since Cone’s corrective, post-modern African American evangelical and neo-evangelical theologians have come to recognize the limitations of liberation as a central interpretive motif for Black Theology and the Black Church. Liberation as the central interpretive motif falls short in aiding the development and articulation of a systematized holistic Christian theology that is both liberating and redeeming for the Black Church. Therefore, as an African American neo-evangelical theologian, I offer this article as a way forward for the revitalization of African American Christianity and evangelical Black Theology. My intention is to provide an African American Holistic Christian Theology that is both liberating and redeeming. It includes a brief historical background of the Black Church and the development of its theology. It articulates a way of studying Christian doctrine within an African American holistic evangelical context. It defines theology and African American Holistic Christian Theology. It sets forth the task, sources, norm, and method of a system that will ensure that Black Theology remains within the confines of certain biblical and traditional confessions that are necessary for a holistic study of God.

Historical Background

Albert J. Raboteau in his book *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* writes, “the enslavement of an estimated ten million Africans over a period of almost four centuries in the Atlantic slave trade, one of the most durable and adaptable constituents of the slave’s culture, linking African past with American present, was his religion.”² The biblical witness of God’s deliverance of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and slavery became a bulwark for the slave’s aspiration to be free. Raboteau writes:

Gazing back at their lives in slavery, former slaves affirmed that they had trusted in the Lord and that the Lord had delivered them. Like the children of Israel of old, they had lived through Egypt and Exodus and the experience had constituted them a peculiar, a chosen, people. This identity was to remain...a bedrock of hope for freed black Christians as it had been for them as slaves.³

The historical saga of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and slavery, along with the instruction to Moses “...make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exodus

1 James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1990), 1.

2 Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4.

3 Ibid., 320

25:8),⁴ was the major impetus for freed African American Christians' creation of the Black Church. Independent, historic, and totally African American controlled denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Incorporated, the National Baptist Convention of America Unincorporated, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the Church of God in Christ, and various smaller and independent churches "were founded after the Free African Society of 1787."⁵ Like the tabernacle of Moses, the Black Church came into being for God to dwell with the freed slaves in their wilderness of Emancipation: "Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so I might dwell among them" (Exodus 29:45-46).

One of the few stable and coherent institutions that emerged from slavery for African Americans was the Black Church. According to Lincoln and Mamiya:

The Black Church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and it nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development. E. Franklin Frazier's apt descriptive phrase, "nation within a nation," pointed to the multifarious levels of community involvement found in the Black Church, in addition to traditional concerns of worship, moral nurture, education, and social control. Much of black culture is heavily indebted to the black religious tradition, including most forms of black music, drama, literature, storytelling, and even humor.⁶

According to C. Eric Lincoln, "the central figure in the Black Church is the black preacher,"⁷ the Black Church's Moses. The black preacher was not only male, but female as well. Vashti Murphy McKenzie, the first female elected Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, reminds us that "African American clergywomen and African American women in general have a rich legacy of African female leadership...."⁸ The role of African American women in leadership among their community was opposite of the way that the larger society portrayed white women. McKenzie writes:

Just as women of ancient Africa were not silent and subservient, African American women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not view themselves as fragile or helpless, in the way that the larger society portrayed White women. Our female African ancestors viewed their maternal roles as more than just a paradigm category. They used the role of motherhood as an opportunity to raise, nurture, and train the children who would one day rise up and free "Israel" from the hand of the oppressor.

The social injustices of the era were so catastrophic that women did not see themselves as separate from men but allies with men. They were willing participants against slavery and later racism, prejudicial laws, Jim Crowism, and other apartheid-like structures. They reinterpreted the roles of mother, sister, daughter, and wife from positions of weakness into positions of power and influence. Biblical images of women serving with men in mission and ministry motivated them into action.⁹

The journey of leadership of the African American preacher/theologian from America's Egypt to America's Exodus of Emancipation is extraordinary. From the time of colonial America, the Great

4 All biblical quotations are from the *New International Version* unless otherwise noted.

5 C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 1.

6 *Ibid.*, 8.

7 C. Eric Lincoln, ed., *The Black Experience in Religion* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974), 65.

8 Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without a Struggle* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1996), 14.

9 *Ibid.*, 29-30.

Awakening, the Civil War and the end of slavery, the African American preacher/theologian, like Moses, recognized that Africans needed a place where its leader and people could come together and deliberate their survival and freedom in communion and worship with the Lord God Almighty. Despite the many obstacles they faced, African American preacher/theologians believed that God's presence was amongst them and this presence abode in the Black Church. Such extraordinary leadership in the words of Bishop McKenzie was "not without a struggle." Lincoln aptly describes this struggle. He writes:

He came from a tradition which required no education for the simple reason that education of Blacks was verboten in the South, and severely circumscribed everywhere else. But despite the fact he had none of the tools of sociology, economics, political science or even a systematized theology, in most instances he gave effective leadership which advanced black survival to a marked degree at a time when mere survival itself was an accomplishment. The black preacher was pitted against a vast array of forces and powers far from beyond his ken, equipped only with the confidence of his calling and the instinct for deliverance and freedom. Deliverance may come early or late. That is God's prerogative, and it was within this reference of "God's time" that the black preacher gauged his responsibilities and structured his leadership.

When slavery was ended, the ministry had already been established as the preeminent profession, and despite the established tradition of the acceptability of an uneducated clergy, the acceptable was never considered the ideal, and the first Blacks to seek to improve themselves through schooling, and then to teach others, were clergymen. The first black schools were seminaries established by churches to produce an educated ministry.¹⁰

The Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth, whose theology was fashioned in the fires of Safewi Switzerland's undisciplined capitalism and oppression of its working class, along with Europe's Great War of nations and the slaughtering of one another in such a barbaric fashion, became horrified with the suicide of the European bourgeois culture. The failure and disappointment of European liberal theology to deal with the various manifestations of oppression and injustice within European societies led Barth to reflect upon the possibility of a "theology of freedom" within the American theological landscape. Barth asked, "Will such a specific American theology one day arise?"¹¹

Such a specific American theology of freedom did arise within the Black Church called Black Theology. According to Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Karl Barth, when he came to Chicago in 1963, did not know enough about Black people to appreciate how Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X laid the groundwork for a new American theology. If Barth had lived through that momentous decade, he would have celebrated Black Theology as the answer to his question...."¹²

More than four decades have elapsed since the rise of an American "theology of freedom" called Black Theology. James H. Cone notes:

The rise of Black theology in the 1960s and early 1970s represented the first self-conscious attempt by African American ministers and scholars of religion to define the faith of Black churches differently from White American Protestantism. When Blacks separated themselves from White denominations and organized their own churches in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they did not perceive their actions as being motivated by theological differences. They accepted without alternation the church doctrines and politics of White denominations from which they separated. For

¹⁰ Lincoln, *Black Experience*, 66-67.

¹¹ James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume One: 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 4.

¹² Ibid., 3-4.

Blacks their separation was based, as Bishop R.R. Wright of the African Methodist Episcopal Church said in 1947, “entirely upon sociological grounds: to promote brotherhood and equality across racial lines.”¹³

Black Theology arose out of the need of Africans to affirm their being in a hostile American society. The statement of the National Committee of Black Churchmen of June 13, 1969, issued at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia, adequately explained and answered the question, “Why Black Theology?” It reads:

Black Theology is not a gift of the Christian gospel dispensed to slaves; rather it is an appropriation which black slaves made of the gospel given by their white oppressors. Black Theology has been nurtured, sustained and passed on in the black churches in various ways of expression. Black Theology has dealt with the ultimate and violent issues of life and death for a people despised and degraded.

The black church has not only nurtured black people but enabled them to survive brutalities that ought not to have been afflicted on any community of men. Black Theology is the product of black Christian experience and reflection. It comes out of the past. It is strong in the present. And we believe it is redemptive for the future.

This indigenous theological formation of faith emerged from the stark need of the fragmented black community to affirm itself as a part of the kingdom of God. White theology sustained the American slave system and negated the humanity of blacks. This indigenous Black Theology, based on the imaginative black experience, was the best hope for the survival of black people. This is a way of saying that Black Theology was already present in the spirituals and slave songs and exhortations of slave preachers and their descendants.

All theologies arise out of the communal experience with God. At this moment in time, the black community seeks to express its theology in language that speaks to the contemporary mood of black people.¹⁴

Studying Christian Doctrine within an African American Holistic Evangelical Context

The Twenty-first Century has dawned and Black Theology finds itself within a constructive stage. A third generation of African American evangelical and neo-evangelical theologians have taken up the task of maintaining evangelicalism within the historic Black church by constructing a holistic Christian theology that does not abandon its historic Black church roots, while yet remaining within the parameters of certain biblical and traditional confessions. This holistic Christian theology is a theology of liberation, as well as redemption. It seeks to help ensure Black theology’s relevance and usefulness within the Black church in particular, and the church in general. It takes seriously the warning of Bruce L. Fields, “Unless black theology remains within the parameters of certain biblical and traditional confessions, its power will dissipate and it will be rendered ineffective as a servant to the black church in particular, and the church in general.”¹⁵ Before we proceed to articulate how to study Christian doctrine within an African American holistic evangelical context, it is helpful for us to define theology and its central interpretive motif, as well as African American Holistic Evangelical Theology.

The Definitions of Theology and African American Holistic Christian Theology

The word “theology” is composed of two Greek words: *theos* (God) and *logos* (word, language, discourse, study). It is the science of studying God. This science studies the teaching about God, as

¹³ Ibid., 89.

¹⁴ Cone and Wilmore, eds, *Black Theology*, 3-4.

¹⁵ Bruce L. Fields, *Introducing Black Theology: 3 Crucial Questions for the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 103.

well as God's actions of liberating and redeeming humankind. In the African American evangelical perspective, it is the science of studying the God of creation whose essence is Divine love or *agapē* (1 John 4: 13-21) that was freely given (John 3:16), as revealed in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth (the Christ) for the healing, liberation, reconciliation, and redemption of humankind. It seeks to understand humankind's vital need for this divine love, as well as its need to reciprocate this pure and unconditional Divine love towards God the Creator, the Christian body of believers (the church), the human family, the environment (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:34-40), as well as oneself. Its central characterization or interpretive motif is Divine love.

African American Holistic Christian Theology is a theology whose genesis is "The Black Church in the African American Experience."¹⁶ It is a theology of healing, liberation, reconciliation, and redemption. It does not abandon its historic Black Church roots, yet remains within the parameters of certain biblical and traditional confessions. It is holistic in that it insists that the Gospel deals with the whole of the person and the earth's environment. It is concerned with the spiritual, social, economic conditions of humankind. Also, it is concerned with the good stewardship of the Earth and its environment.

This theology is evangelical in that it is a:

...reflection on both scripture and tradition, with scripture as the norm. For evangelical theology scripture is both the primary source and highest norm. However, the primacy of scripture does not exclude tradition as a secondary source and norm for theology. Evangelicals, who are prone at times to bypass two millennia of church history in order to focus on the primary sources, impoverish themselves by ignoring the Spirit's previous work in the church. A careful study of creeds, confessions, and other forms of Christian literature can deepen our understanding of scripture and prevent short-sighted theological efforts which merely 'reinvent the wheel.' Evangelical theology is also reflection on the sources of the faith and the [holistic] mission and purpose of the Christian church in mutual relation.¹⁷

African American evangelical theology is a task/function theology. It is task theology in that it is a "theology hammered out in response to the challenges posed by the Great Commission."¹⁸ In addition, it is function theology in that it arises out of the community of the oppressed and relates "the forces of liberation to the essence of the Gospel, which is Jesus Christ."¹⁹ Having briefly discussed some of the more important historical particulars that have shaped African American evangelicalism in the American experience, and having briefly defined theology and African American Holistic Christian Theology, we are now in the position to discuss and briefly outline the task, sources, norm, and method of this theology.

Tasks, Sources, Norm, and Method

For the title of his African American systematic theology, James Evans rightfully uses Margaret Walker's words "We Have Been Believers" as an affirmation of the faith of African American Christians. However, not only have African American Christians been believers, but also we have been keepers of a holistic evangelical Christianity that was birthed in the Black Church. The Black Church has both been the spiritual and cultural womb of the black community and has developed a holistic perspective of the Gospel, along with a holistic perspective of its theology, wherein faith and practice were one. Dwight Perry explains:

16 See: Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*.

17 John Jefferson Davis, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 44.

18 Ibid., 45.

19 Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1.

A dichotomy between faith and practice never developed within the context of the Black church, because the church played a central role in the freedom of its people from the degradation of slavery. The Black church had to develop a holistic perspective on what the gospel means to everyday life to help its members cope with the anathema of being Black in White America.

The White church in this country developed in the absence of oppression; it could afford to dichotomize the gospel, allowing it to apply to spiritual issues but not social ones. By contrast, slavery caused the Black church to develop a theology that was not only more holistic in its application but that stressed such themes as liberation both here and in the afterlife and created a theology of hope centered on heaven that was central to the gospel message. Additionally, its emotive form of worship reinforced experiential rather than didactic tendencies.²⁰

Since the early 1960s, such factors were the impetus for a movement of African American evangelicals to bring evangelicalism into the mainstream of the religious experience of African American Christianity, particularly within the historic Black church. As keepers of the faith of a holistic perspective of Christianity, and with the rise of Black theology as a discipline in the academy, African American evangelical pastors, theologians, and religious scholars recognized the need for Black theology to expound upon this holistic perspective of Christianity, as it related to Christian doctrine. It is in this context that African American evangelical theologians are called upon to articulate the task, sources, norm, and method for an African American Holistic Christian Theology within an evangelical context.

Tasks

African American evangelical theologians have three tasks. “Christian theology involves articulating and reflecting on the faith commitments we share as Christians. These are informed by the Bible and carried out in specific historical-cultural context, for the purpose of living for the glory of God,”²¹ notes Dwight Perry. Therefore, the first task for African American evangelical theologians is to reflect and expound upon the holistic presuppositions of African American Christianity in relationship to tenets of sound Christian doctrine. In order to articulate those holistic faith commitments, Christians ought to share in a postmodern world. James H. Evans has articulated the second task for African American theologians, which is “to clarify the contexts – historical, sociopolitical, cultural, and intellectual – in which African-American Christian faith is affirmed.”²²

The third and final task of a holistic African American evangelical Christian theology is the matter of social ethics. It has been the prophetic self-disclosure of God’s love, justice, and wrath and the teachings of Jesus Christ that have been foundational for African American evangelical Christians regarding ethical living in the world. The biblical perspective, authority, and moral directives have always been the primary source for African American Christian social ethics. The task of understanding how Christian social ethics functions within a holistic vision of life and society based upon the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ begins with a holistic perspective of the Ten Commandments, which the Law and Prophets of the Old Testament are based upon, and the Life and Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament as its primary sources for perspectives and moral directives. Also included are the interaction with concepts from the physical and social sciences.

20 Dwight Perry, *Breaking Down Barriers: A Black Evangelical Explains the Black Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 20-21.

21 Ibid.

22 James H. Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 3.

Therefore, the task of Christian social ethics for African American evangelical theologians is to utilize ethical discernment that is informed by concepts from Christian tradition's interaction with a holistic African American Christianity that will sustain ways of life with distinctive loyalties, and values that are patterned after the holistic life and teachings of Jesus that are summed up in the Ten Commandments, upon which the Law and the Prophets are based. In addition, this includes the interaction of concepts from both the physical and the social sciences, in particular as they relate to the African American experience.

Now that the tasks of a holistic African American evangelical Christian theology have briefly been defined, it is important to discuss briefly the sources, norm, and method that this theology will utilize in undertaking an objective scientific study of Christian doctrine in relationship to its holistic propositions of African American evangelical Christianity. Scientific investigation requires some of the traditional criteria of scientific knowledge in order to be a science (though, not in the narrow sense of the natural sciences), according to Millard J. Erickson. Erickson in his book *Introducing Christian Doctrine* has presented the proper context in which theology is to be viewed as a science. He lists some of the traditional criteria of scientific knowledge that our theology will be dealing with:

- (1) a definite object of study; (2) a method for investigating the subject matter and for verifying assertions; (3) objectivity in the sense that the study deals with phenomena external to the immediate experience of the learner and therefore accessible to investigation by others; and (4) coherence among the propositions of the subject matter so that the content forms a definite body of knowledge rather than a series of unrelated or loosely connected facts.²³

Sources

Allen Dwight Callahan reminds us that "African Americans are the children of slavery in America. And the Bible, as no other book, is the book of slavery's children."²⁴ Therefore, the primary source from which our knowledge will be drawn is the Bible (the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) with particular focus on: (1) the Ten Commandments, upon which the Law and Prophets of the Old Testament are based; (2) the teachings, life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, as recorded in the New Testament. The Bible is the authority that is the proper starting point for constructing a Christian theology of hope that brings about healing, reconciliation, liberation, and redemption for humankind. For African American evangelicals, this source, along with a personal experience of God and Jesus' love ethic, has been foundational for African American Christianity, as well as the cornerstone of the historic Black Church. Millard J. Erickson also reminds us of certainties and cautions that must govern and guide our doctrinal construction of Christian theology, as he writes:

We need to make certain, however, that the Bible is the primary authority in our endeavor. We also need to be certain that we do not draw conclusions prematurely about the relationship between biblical and non – biblical materials. While the Bible, when completely understood, and the creation, when completely understood, are in perfect harmony with one another, we must recognize that we do not have a perfect understanding of either one. Accordingly, there may well be some tension at times in our treatment of them.²⁵

While the Bible is the primary source for doctrinal construction of an African American evangelical Christian theology, Erickson reminds us, in addition, that "...it is not, however, the only one. God has revealed himself in a more general sense in his creation and human history.

23 Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, ed. L. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 17.

24 Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), xi.

25 Erickson, *Christian Doctrine*, 21.

Examination of that revelation will help us to understand more fully the special revelation preserved for us in the Bible.”²⁶ Therefore, secondary sources of general revelation to be examined for illumination are: (1) African American Christian Church tradition; (2) African American religious and social experience; (3) and African American culture.

Norm

In the previous section, I have provided the primary and secondary sources of an African American evangelical Christian Theology. Now let us turn our attention to the norm for an African American Holistic Christian Theology. James H. Cone defines the norm of theology as “the hermeneutical principle which is decisive in specifying how sources are to be used by rating their importance and by distinguishing relevant data from irrelevant.”²⁷ Therefore, for Cone, “The norm of black theology must take seriously two realities, actually two aspects of a single reality: the liberation of blacks and the revelation of Jesus Christ....The norm of all God-talk which seeks to be black-talk is the manifestation of Jesus as the black Christ who provides the necessary soul for black liberation.”²⁸ Clearly, liberation is Cone’s hermeneutical principle or norm.

However, it is my belief that liberation by itself as the hermeneutical principle or norm does not aid African American Christianity in its effort to reflect and expound upon its holistic presuppositions in relationship to those holistic tenets of sound Christian doctrine. Liberation as the only norm falls short in articulating the holistic faith commitments we share as Christians in a postmodern world. Cone contends that Christian Theology is a theology of liberation. He writes, “It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ.”²⁹ However, I contend that, in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, the essence, indeed the very nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ is Divine love (*agapē*) to which the forces of liberation must be related and not vice-versa. Historically, African American Christian Theology has been and must ever remain a theology that is healing, liberating, reconciling, and redeeming.

Therefore, the norm of an African American Holistic Christian Theology within an evangelical context must deal with the whole of a person, “not only his soul but his body; not only his spiritual well-being but his material well-being.”³⁰ Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us that “any religion which professes concern about the souls of men and is not concerned about the social and economic conditions that scar the soul, is a spiritually moribund religion only waiting for the day to be buried.”³¹ The hermeneutical principle or theological norm that will guide the interpretation of the meaning of contemporary Christianity for African American evangelicals is the revelation of God as love in the person and work of Jesus Christ for the healing, liberation, reconciliation, and redemption of the oppressed. Now that we have identified and articulated the theme that is most significant and helpful in approaching theology as a whole, it is important to spell out logical procedures for its development.

Method

Millard J. Erickson spells out the procedures for the development of a sound theology. He writes, “The reader will notice that in this procedure biblical theology, in both the ‘true’ and ‘pure’ sense, is developed before systematic theology, so that the sequence is exegesis – biblical theology

26 Erickson, *Christian Doctrine*, 21.

27 Cone, *Black Theology*, 35.

28 Ibid., 38.

29 Cone, *Black Theology*, 1.

30 Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 91.

31 Ibid., 91.

– systematic theology. We do not move directly from exegesis to systematic theology.”³² Erickson outlines the following steps of his method as follows: 1) Collection of the biblical material; 2) Unification of the biblical materials; 3) Analysis of the meaning of biblical teaching; 4) Examination of historical treatments; 5) Identification of the essence of the doctrine; 6) Illumination from sources beyond the Bible; 7) Contemporary expression of the doctrine; 8) Development of a central interpretive motif; 9) Stratification of the topics.³³

Concluding Thoughts

It has been nearly 50 years since the emergence of Black Theology as a formal discipline within the Christian theological landscape. African American Christian theologians, non-evangelical and evangelical alike, are in the constructive stage of producing a holistic Christian Theology of liberation and redemption. This small and humble effort is a continuation of that calling from an African American neo-evangelical perspective. It seeks to fulfill an urgent need of the Black Church, the Church universal, and humankind for a systematized holistic Christian Theology of love, justice, liberation, and redemption. It is my hope and prayer that this effort toward a holistic Christian Theology will serve the Black Church and the church universal in fulfilling the Great Commission through holistic ministry.

Rev. Glenn L. Campbell is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He studied at both the Boston (CUME) and South Hamilton campus where he earned a Master of Divinity in Urban Ministry (M.Div.) and the Master of Theology with a concentration in theology and culture (Th.M.), respectively. While attending Gordon-Conwell, he authored the master thesis “The Theology and Ethics of Reconciliation in the Thought of Howard Thurman.” Since then, he has served as an Athanasius Teaching Scholar in Christian Theology and has lectured on Black Theology. Rev. Campbell is a member of the Phi Alpha Chi scholastic honor society.

³² Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 66.

³³ *Ibid.*, 66-79.

Preparing Urban Scholar Practitioners

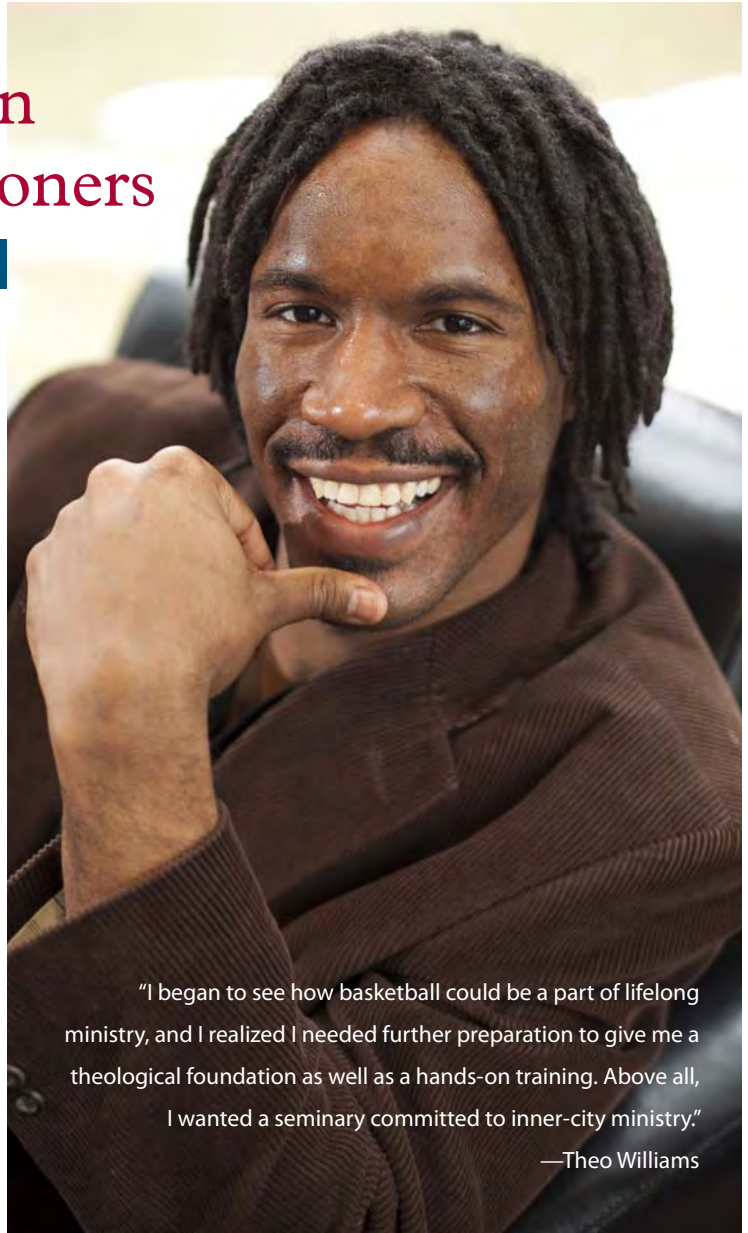
THEO WILLIAMS

Theo Williams grew up playing basketball, dreaming he'd play professionally someday. But as Theo entered college, God used a series of injuries to change his priorities. He began to coach, using basketball to reach inner city youth for Jesus Christ.

Theo enrolled in the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell. While at CUME, Theo co-founded and served as president of Antioch, Inc., a nonprofit committed to reconciliation, assisted in the planting of a church and honed his poetry skills. Upon graduating in 2004 with a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry, Theo and his wife Nicole spent a year in Jamaica mentoring youth through sports and music.

Theo currently works at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana, as Associate Professor of Communication, as well as the Faculty Coordinator for the Center for Intercultural Development.

Whether teaching speech, conducting multicultural youth ministry, recording a spoken-word album, or starting a new church, Theo is integrating what he learned in the classroom and through his experiences at CUME.



"I began to see how basketball could be a part of lifelong ministry, and I realized I needed further preparation to give me a theological foundation as well as a hands-on training. Above all, I wanted a seminary committed to inner-city ministry."

—Theo Williams

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Spiritual Formation for a Christian Puerto Rican/Latino in a Postmodern Urban Context

DAVID A. ESCOBAR ARCAÏ

The Culture War: Need, Rationale & Critical Significance

Although the issues of our days continue to affirm the presence of a culture war,¹ many would rather deny, neglect, deflect or belittle the issues or actors themselves. There are many reasons for this. Among these is the claim that to disagree is to be intolerant. This represents rather a distortion of the concept of “tolerance.”² Another reason is the reluctance by many to see dichotomies or to divide people between different and opposing camps. An attempt to return to a golden era or some sort of nostalgic era represents still another obstacle. The notion of legal positivism and the ideal of progress or the evolving nature of the constitution, as some legal and constitutional scholars have aptly stated it, is another major challenge.³ In simple terms (and for the purpose of this article), this implies that laws are human constructs and therefore separated, empty, or naked of ethics and morality, particularly the ones rooted in a Judeo-Christian worldview. The notion of diversity as the greatest strength of America on the one hand and the calls for unity or commonality (as the new metaphor for “melting pot” in America) on the other hand are factors in this decisive culture war.⁴ The inevitable reality of a fragmented, postmodern, globalized and “flat” world as well as the search for a third way out of the two-way answer paradigm pushes for the redefinition, reframing and rethinking of institutional structures and cultures.⁵ Remarkable issues in this culture war include the trivialization and misuse of religion and God in politics⁶ and the

1 It is critical to note here that I am assuming an ongoing culture war in America over on whose ethos should our institutions be grounded and by what values should we conduct our lives as both Christians and non-Christians. While I assume the presence of a culture war, approaches differ as to how the church and/or those concerned with ethics should deal with or confront it. Examples of works that highlight this differing approach are the following: James D. Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in a Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008). For the culture wars in general with specific reference to the United States of America see the following: Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990); Rabbi Daniel Lapin, *America's Real War* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1999); James Davidson Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Control Family, Law, Education, Arts and Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Gerald Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars: How the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992); Daniel A. Farber and Suzanna Sherry, *Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Robert P. George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2001); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures: A Searching Examination of American Society in the Aftermath of Our Cultural Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); John W. Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982); Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

2 Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *The New Tolerance: How a Cultural Movement Threatens to Destroy You, Your Faith and Your Children* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998).

3 See Christopher Wolfe, *The Rise of Modern Judicial Review: From Constitutional Interpretation to Judge-Made Law* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994); Robert H. Bork, *The Tempting of America: The Political Seduction of the Law* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990); Robert H. Bork, *A Country I Do Not Recognize: The Legal Assault on American Values* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2005).

4 See Tamar Jacoby, *Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means to Be American* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on Multicultural America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); Daniel Patrick Moynihan, & Nathan Glazer, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1970).

5 See Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005); Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1988); Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge, 2003); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 1990).

6 See Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law & Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New

appropriation of the doctrine of exceptionalism⁷ for America for the formation and execution of foreign policy and domestic agendas – the strengths, weaknesses and contradictions of which have been amply documented.⁸ These are some of the conceptual and philosophical battlegrounds on which cultural forces clash for loyalty.

To ameliorate these battles and even to defeat their opponents, theorists, researchers, ministers, scholars, politicians and others have resorted to advocate major and minor in-house as well as outside-the-house strategies and techniques. For example, in education while some have endeavored to chronicle and describe how the history of education unfolds and affects the practice of educational theories and ideas, and have even tried to reform the system from the inside, others have promoted models that are alternative to the public schools themselves. Likewise, in church ministry, theologians and ministers have attempted to get inside the black box (meaning re-structuring and re-culturing) of existing church institutions, while others advocate for models outside the realm of existing and regular traditional churches.⁹

One critical aspect within these church reformation or transformation efforts is what kind of disciple one seeks to build up, create and nurture and how that takes place in an increasingly diverse world and societies without neglecting the biblical mandate and injunction of our Lord to humankind about spiritual formation or discipleship (Matt. 28:18-20, New Living Translation).

The aim of this article is to examine how we contribute to providing for spiritual formation and educational renewal, given the realities of our fragmented and diverse identities, the condition of postmodern society, the implications of our urban contexts and the resulting tension-driven drama upon which our churches thrive or merely survive. Spiritual formation is one of the fundamental tenets needed in order to play a responsive and constructive part in the culture war. Thus, this article seeks to explore, describe, revisit and problematize spiritual formation from the assumption that much of what is missing in its practice is a holistic and integrative process. Spiritual formation in this article is critically examined through the lens of an urban Latino. The ethics of spiritual formation in the culture war implies that discipleship cannot be taught in isolation, detached, or disentangled from the identity of a people, its postmodern condition, urban context and the tensions that underlie value systems that inevitably collide. The point here is to urge readers to enlarge their immediate context(s) and consider how to embrace spiritual formation in a multicultural world. As a result, I examine identity. I realize I cannot escape the fact that I am Puerto Rican. I am conscious that the Gospel and its God are global in nature, but I also recognize that homogeneous climates may enhance existing practices that devalue human dignity, and the tension between these two realities causes implications for theology and ministry.

This article consists of four sections. The first section briefly examines the meaning of spiritual formation in light of identity, the postmodern condition and the urban context. Against this background, the second section explores the tensions the church faces as it seeks to provide spiritual formation in a postmodern urban context. In the third section, I reflect on lessons acquired over the years. The final section offers some concluding critical remarks.

York: Basic Books, 1993); Stephen Carter, *God's Name in Vain: The Wrongs & Rights of Religion in Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

7 This is basically a doctrine that states and highlights that America is quite different from other nations. French political thinker and historian, Alexis-Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville, underscores this exceptionalism when he states that “the position of the Americas is therefore quite exceptional and it may be believed that no other democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one” in Alexander Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Langley, 1840, 36).

8 See Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008); Peter H. Schuck & James Q. Wilson, *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

9 One example of these is the emerging church literature. Pastor and author Brian McLaren seems to advocate models that are not traditional and even advocate a disdain for institutionalism and dogmatism, see Brian McLaren, *They Like Jesus, but Not the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

Spiritual Formation

There is no single and definitive definition of spiritual formation. In fact, spiritual formation is often used interchangeably with “disciple,” “disciple-making,” “discipleship,” and “Christ like character.” Some definitions and descriptions of these include:

Spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end, and its result is love of God with all of the heart, soul, mind and strength, and of the neighbor as oneself. The human self is then fully integrated under God.¹⁰

In the world we live in, the “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), which is another word for discipleship, is needed now more than ever. This “obedience of faith” is a costly discipleship that is informed by the cross and God’s costly grace... Furthermore, this costly discipleship must manifest itself in an incarnational ministry of love and justice ... we must go “beyond cheap grace.”¹¹

Spiritual formation works with the whole person, not only with a soul to be saved or a mind to be taught.¹²

A disciple is a person-in-process who is eager to learn and apply the truths that Jesus Christ teaches him, which will result in ever-deepening commitments to a Christ-like style.¹³

Discipleship is the proactive process of growing in godliness (Christlikeness) through the exercise of spiritual disciplines.¹⁴

Discipleship is not achieved just by memorizing Scripture verses. Nor is discipleship merely going to church. A transformation must take place within the person in order to become a disciple and to continue becoming a follower of Christ.¹⁵

A disciple is a learner who is following Jesus Christ, and whose life is marked by obedience, love and fruitfulness.¹⁶

A disciple is a devoted follower of Jesus Christ who lives and thinks according to the Word of God.¹⁷

First of all, it is clear that, if we would make disciples, we should disciple ... To plan on making disciples we need to know what one is and how people become disciples and we need to know these things by personal experience, as did the first generation of Jesus’ people.¹⁸

Discipleship is not a supposed second step in Christianity, as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. From the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian.¹⁹

10 Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 56.

11 Eldin Villafaña, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), xiii.

12 Kenneth O. Gangel, & James C. Wilhoit, *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 13.

13 Willard, *Renovation*, 56.

14 Ron Bennet & John Purvis, *The Adventure of Disciplining Others: Training in the Art of Disciplemaking* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003), 56.

15 Gangel & Wilhoit, *Christian Educator’s*, 16.

16 Willard, *Renovation*, 31.

17 Willard, *Renovation*, 31.

18 Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 299-300.

19 James Montgomery Boise, *Christ’s Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 16.

Despite not having a single agreed-upon meaning, these definitions of spiritual formation have something in common: a process orientation. Discipleship is a deliberate experiential and learning journey that attends both internal and external dimensions. Foster brilliantly reminds us of “not turning the disciplines into law”²⁰ for they will be soul-killing. He classifies the disciplines as three kinds: inward (meditation, prayer, fasting and study), outward (simplicity, solitude, submission and service), and corporate (confession, worship, guidance and celebration). The ultimate challenge of the disciplines is to build and nurture a holistic and organic Christianity.

Before turning to a discussion of identity, the postmodern world and the urban context, it is critical to point out the essence of the mind in the Christian walk, an aspect that has been historically neglected in Christian circles and thus has become a source of much anti-intellectualism and lack of engagement with the world as salt and light.²¹ Spiritual formation demands a mind for God.²² Spiritual formation demands the training of the mind. Christians should be equipped and nurtured to love God with their minds. The ministry of the church should be designed somehow to allow and encourage Christians to analyze world-views, disciple their minds, know human nature and have a wider understanding of the duties of our cultural and social centers.

This is why spiritual formation demands the transformation of the mind and the will. Willard states that transforming the mind and the will means that we attend to the thought life, feelings, and character. Thoughts are changed by dealing with ideas, images, information and our ability to analyze. Feelings are changed by focusing on God (love, joy, and peace), rather than on what we want, a hard thing to do in a culture that is feeling-dominated and oriented. Feelings are changed when we make choices based on what is true and right from God’s perspective. Finally, changing the will to conform to God’s will is to break free from the entanglements of desire that govern us. Willard makes it clear that stepping free from entanglements is a process in which the spiritual disciplines (mentioned above) function to “cause the duplicity and malice that is buried in our will and character to surface.”²³ Changing the will is not an isolated process.

Spiritual formation is about the development and growth of the believer through the disciplines (internal, external and corporate). That is, spiritual formation is neither an event, nor should it be restricted to evangelism (specifically soul-winning) and an array of me-centered and market-oriented strategies that inundate American Christianity. This development and growth is a process that has to begin to focus on the transformation of the mind, namely the thought life, feelings and the will. In short, spiritual formation is a holistic and life-long process. How does identity, our postmodern age and the urban context affect, influence, or shape spiritual formation?

Spiritual Formation and Identity

Spiritual formation includes the exploration and discussion of personal identity as a starting point. Huntington defines identities as having an individual and group dimension; constructed; multiple; defined by the self and by the interaction of self and others, and situational, as well as rooted in ascriptive, cultural, territorial, political, economic and social sources.²⁴ Thus, identity

20 Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 2.

21 See for example, James W. Sire, *Discipleship of the Mind: Learning to Love God with the Ways We Think* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990); James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000); Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2005); John R. Stott, *Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007); Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); James Porter Moreland & Dallas Willard, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997); Gene Edward Veith, *Loving God with All Your Mind: Thinking as a Christian in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003); Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

22 James Emery White, *A Mind for God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

23 Willard, *Renovation*, 155.

24 Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster,

is complex and multifaceted. However, Christlike formation requires an awareness of identity struggles. As a Puerto Rican, I can attest to the reality that my identity as a Puerto Rican is beyond a North American description because it is the product of an unending political struggle and colonial relationship²⁵ between the U.S.A. (the mainland) and Puerto Rico (island) and thus also a daily personal and systemic struggle because of the seeming contradictions found in a culture that promotes a set of different values and beliefs than one's own. Crespo²⁶ cites the work of Carmen Ross to explain these different value systems:

United States of America	Puerto Rican
1. Human beings have control over the universe and their own destiny.	1. Universe is controlled by external forces, and so is human destiny (fatalism).
2. Optimistic outlook on life; humankind and its condition are improvable.	2. Pessimistic outlook on life; human beings must resign themselves to adversity.
3. The nuclear family concept, independence and self-reliance.	3. The extended family and the obligation to each other.
4. Greater equality of the sexes, more freedom, independence and self-reliance among women.	4. Male superiority (machismo), protection and shelter of women.
5. Male and female roles are more interchangeable than a decade ago.	5. Male and female roles are separated at an early age and rigidly delineated.
6. Respect for human achievements and material possessions.	6. Belief in the innate dignity and worth of the person; worth is not in one's achievements, material or otherwise (humanistic values).
7. Greater emphasis on materialism, making physical conditions more comfortable.	7. Greater emphasis on spiritual values and self-perfection.
8. Personality development, refinement and deference to others are less valued traits.	8. Personalism and concomitant values of pride, honor and respect.
9. Assertiveness, initiative and action orientation are highly prized traits.	9. Submissiveness, deference to others and passivity are the ultimate "civilized" behavior.
10. Children's upbringing stresses independence and self-reliance.	10. Children's upbringing stresses obedience and respect for parental authority.
11. Friendships patterns are casual, friendly and committed.	11. Friendship patterns are restrictive, involving complete commitment, loyalty and devotion (compadrazco system).
12. Future oriented; places a high value on technology and progress.	12. Past oriented, places a high value on tradition.

2004).

²⁵ José Trías Monge, *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

²⁶ A note of clarification: Some of these claims regarding different value systems may be questionable and possibly a bit outdated. However, they are merely used here to compare and contrast so as to illustrate the critical role of culture particularly as it pertains to spiritual formation.

The differences and underlying values espoused in the chart by these two groups were crucial in my spiritual formation. I am not saying that either American or Puerto Rican value systems as advocated by Carmen Ross will inform spiritual formation. In fact, many of these values can prevent many Americans as well as Puerto Ricans and Latinos(as) from cultivating, deepening and nurturing their Christlike character. I am only pointing out that these American and Puerto Rican value systems must be closely examined and questioned because they exert a heavy and sometimes unconscious influence in our spiritual development as well as the way we handle, design, or care for the spiritual formation of others.²⁷ Exploring underlying assumptions and implications of personal identity is a necessity if we are to achieve holistic spiritual formation in a multicultural world.²⁸ For example, facilitating and cultivating spiritual formation should take into account the reality that fatalism (a pessimistic look at life) is sometimes sadly part of the psychological-emotional outlook of some people within the Puerto Rican/Latino community. This is so not because of people's own choice or fault but because their identity has been shaped by the history of exploitation, colonialism and oppression. These historical realities may have an impact on people's trust and openness to a system or an authority figure thus perhaps delaying the development and nurturing of life-long relationships that are critical to spiritual formation.

Spiritual Formation in a Postmodern World

We live and serve in a postmodern world.²⁹ Our present postmodern condition can be best understood by contrasting it with the periods that preceded it, namely the premodern and modern. The premodern period was "characterized by a belief in the rationality of the universe. It was generally thought of as a dualistic universe or in some senses, supernatural or at least extranatural. Reality was not restricted to the observable system known as nature."³⁰ On the other hand, the modern period shared guiding beliefs of the premodern period, namely "metaphysical realism, the correspondence view of truth and the referential theory of language ... and a discernible pattern of history."³¹ However, the modern period diverged from the premodern in the identification of reasons or causes for guiding beliefs. Erickson explains: "Rather than being located above or beyond history, its reason and pattern were found within it. The forces that drive history were, in other words, believed to be immanent within it."³² Thus, people searched for explanations, causes, or purposes for reality and events outside the supernatural. The elimination of a reference point for final causes or purposes led to the birth of a number of movements: naturalism, humanism, the scientific method, reductionism, determinism, individualism, anti-authoritarianism and a focusing on nature as a dynamic, growing and developing force,³³ all of which included a radical drift toward secularism.³⁴ Prominent intellectual and former President of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel brilliantly describes the modern period:

27 Aida Besançon Spencer, & William David. Spencer, eds., *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

28 Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Steve S. Kang, & Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

29 Gene Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994); Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodern World: Discerning the Times and the Spirit of Our Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002); Marva J. Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 24); Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

30 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, 160).

31 Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, 16).

32 Erickson, *Postmodernizing*, 16.

33 Ibid., p. 17.

34 Carl F. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization: The Drift toward Neo-paganism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998); Jefferson J. Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues facing the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004).

The modern era has been dominated by the culminating belief, expressed in different forms, that the world -- and Being as such -- is a wholly knowable system governed by a finite number of universal laws that man can grasp and rationally direct for his own benefit. This era, beginning in the Renaissance and developing from the Enlightenment to socialism, from positivism to scientism, from the Industrial Revolution to the information revolution, was characterized by rapid advances in rational, cognitive thinking.

This, in turn, gave rise to the proud belief that man, as the pinnacle of everything that exists, was capable of objectively describing, explaining and controlling everything that exists, and of possessing the one and only truth about the world. It was an era in which there was a cult of depersonalized objectivity, an era in which objective knowledge was amassed and technologically exploited, an era of belief in automatic progress brokered by the scientific method. It was an era of systems, institutions, mechanisms and statistical averages. It was an era of ideologies, doctrines, interpretations of reality, an era in which the goal was to find a universal theory of the world, and thus a universal key to unlock its prosperity.³⁵

Thus, the modern period praised the development of reason and science and “moved the focus of cultures from the supernatural to the natural.”³⁶ Humankind now believed that certainty, progress, regularity and universality were a result of the increasing insights of science and technology. The modern period also saw the birth of Darwinism, Freudianism and Marxism as universal diagnoses and cures for biological evolution, human behavior and historical events in economic categories respectively. The notion of progress in the modern period began to raise dissatisfaction as it led to a number of events that threatened civilization, namely, “disastrous world wars, severe economic depressions, the violence of Hitler and horror of Auschwitz, the world-changing terror of Hiroshima, the assassination of leaders, massive betrayals by governments, environmental destruction and the relentless dread of the Cold War, the recent frenzy of ethnic cleansing and tribalism, economic chaos in the face of massive global joblessness, the emptiness and ennui of entertainment that keeps dramatically escalating in violence and immorality, the obvious loss of any moral consensus or commitment to the common good.”³⁷

Thus, we find ourselves in the postmodern period. The premodern period embraced the supernatural as the cause behind all rationality inherent in reality and events. The modern period embraced the rationality of reality and events, but rejected their supernatural explanation of source. It sought to locate the course of events in natural, humanistic and scientific sources. The postmodern period, dissatisfied with declining morality, the threat of wars and economic chaos, led to rejection of the modern period, particularly its tenets: progress, certainty and universality. The transition to a postmodern period has huge implications for spiritual formation. Dawn lists the pernicious consequences of postmodernism: there is no such thing as progress, life has no meaning, you are the only one who cares about you, no story is universally true, since there is no such thing as truth except what you create for yourself, every claim to truth is a power play, everything must be mistrusted, there is no order and you only go around once, so do it with gusto.

These consequences imply that the church must wrestle with the effects of postmodernism particularly as it relates to the tensions underscored by Puerto Rican-United States’ different value systems. For example, the church must be equipped to respond to those who point out that Christianity is a violent and oppressive religion used by the white, wealthy and politically powerful

35 Vaclav Havel, “The End of the Modern Era.” *The New York Times*, 15 (Spring 1992). Accessed on April 9, 2010 from <http://www.gse.buffalo.edu/FAS/Bromley/classes/theory/Havel.html> accessed 24 April 2010.

36 Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?*, 24.

37 Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?*, 25.

to colonize and conquer peoples.³⁸ Spiritual formation demands that, in a postmodern age, the church is equipped to accept full responsibility for the undeniable acts that it has committed in the name of God and church, particularly as it relates to the conquest, exploitation and cultural genocide of the Caribbean. It should also be fully open to enter into a dialogue towards reconciliation and healing not only with the Puerto Ricans, but also with the Latino/Hispanic community at large. Spiritual formation also demands that the church be flexible in its structures in order to reach a mestizo Puerto Rican who not only lives politically and socially marginalized and disenfranchised, but also faces tremendous barriers in accessing services for the most pressing basic needs. Finally, the church should attempt non-traditional methods and more inductive approaches (without watering down the message of the Gospel) for reaching a generation of young people who navigate between two worlds (school vs. home, first language vs. second language, local/subculture vs. national culture, family customs vs. societal norms and expectations, etc.). The ongoing dialogue on the implications and meanings of postmodernity for the church should be rekindled and enlarged.³⁹

Spiritual Formation in the Urban Context

I am an urban Christian. I live in the city. My spiritual formation cannot remain immune to the realities and problems that one faces living in the city. Spiritual formation in the inner-city is a process unlike that in the suburbs.⁴⁰ In the urban setting one must struggle with lower levels of socio-economic status; greater and increasing diversity of cultural/ethnic groups; higher levels of violence, migration, community fragmentation and constant reminders of latent racism, sexism, secularism and humanism. In order to provide adequate and balanced spiritual formation, the church should wrestle with its role, vision and theology for the city. Villafañe responds to these questions by offering an overarching framework called Jeremiah's paradigm. Rooted in Jeremiah 29:4-7, his claims are that the urban church attends to a theology of context, mission and prayer. A theology of context highlights the presence of the church in the city in that it implies that, in its quest for spiritual formation, "the church cannot be indifferent to the human needs in the city – be they physical, political, economic, or spiritual"⁴¹ The church is a contextualized entity in the city and stands in solidarity with those who are marginalized and poor. In biblical terms, the church incarnates in the city (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-11).

Spiritual formation in the urban church requires a theology of mission that views the city in a dialectical tension. That is, mission informs the believer and the church that cities cannot and should not be looked upon either as fully good (Cox, 1965) or entirely evil (Ellul, 1993). The city is an enemy and an ally. All cities have the potential to manifest the good and the bad. Villafañe explains that spiritual formation in the urban church should be informed by the concept of Shalom: "Shalom speaks of wholeness, soundness, completeness, health, harmony, reconciliation, justice, welfare – both personal and social. The church is an instrument, a servant, of peace in the city."⁴²

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, spiritual formation in the urban church highlights the critical importance and nature of prayer (Jer. 29:7). Jacques Ellul said: "Action really receives its character from prayer."⁴³ Karl Barth said: "To clasp the hand in prayer is the beginning of an

38 Ken Gnanakan, *Proclaiming Christ in a Pluralistic Context* (Bangalore, India: Book Trust, 2002).

39 Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001); Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

40 Albert Y. Hsu, *The Suburban Christian: Finding Spiritual Vitality in the Land of Plenty* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

41 Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). 3.

42 Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 3.

43 Jacques Ellul, *Prayer and Modern Man* (Denver, CO: Seabury Press, 1973).

uprising against the disorder of the world.”⁴⁴ Villafañe states that “prayer is critical if we are to engage the world. A true urban spirituality knows the critical importance of prayer; it knows that the struggle requires the nurturing and ‘caring of the soul.’”⁴⁵ For me, a theology of spirituality and the spiritual formation of the Christian living in the city must be rooted in the Lord’s Prayer. Through prayer, the Latino/Hispanic church is an agent of sustenance, forgiveness and deliverance/liberation.

Spiritual formation requires a close examination of identity, the postmodern age and the urban space. I am a Christian Puerto Rican pursuing and cultivating spiritual formation in a postmodern urban context. Basically, this means that spiritual formation deals with who I am as a human being, an individual person and a member of an ethnic group and it also attends to the rampant nihilism and relativism that characterizes American contemporary culture and incarnates itself in the conditions that are particular to the setting in which I currently live. In short, spiritual formation takes special care of the person and the context. It is holistic in nature and as such it demands a discussion of the tensions that the church faces in its biblically-sanctioned and God-ordained commission to make disciples.

Tensions facing the Church

Spiritual formation in a postmodern urban context demands a reexamination of the tensions that the church faces. Spiritual formation requires leaders, educators and ministers to identify and examine worldview assumptions. One way of doing this is to underscore the ethics of spiritual formation. The reality and pressing need for spiritual formation cannot and should not be negotiated. Spiritual formation must proceed as mandated by the Scripture. However, spiritual formation cannot remain untainted by the identity of the people it seeks to serve. This is why I have discussed our postmodern and urban context as well as my personal identity. Spiritual formation needs to wrestle with each.

One way that one can begin to cultivate how to help people with the issues of our day in light of spiritual formation is to evaluate structures and cultural practices through contradictions or tensions. These help us see closer the assumptions underlying thoughts and actions that often become institutionalized and appear somehow universal. More importantly, highlighting tensions corresponds to an *and/both*, not an *either/or* paradigm. It is about living in tension between what God demands from us (vertical relationship) and what the world (God’s creation) hopes from us (horizontal relationship). Renowned Christian theologian and ethicist scholar, H. Richard Niebuhr states it succinctly but substantively when he writes:

Belief in Christ and loyalty to his cause involves men in the double movement from world to God and from God to world. Even when theologies fail to do justice to this fact, Christians living with Christ in their cultures are aware of it. For they are forever being challenged to abandon all things for the sake of God; and forever being sent back into the world to teach and practice all the things that have been commanded them.⁴⁶

Competing loyalties and claims will forever be in tension. Therefore, what I am presenting here are some of the inevitable tensions in this double movement that those in charge of spiritual formation must attend to if they are to equip the body of Christ with the tools, humility and wisdom necessary to be responsive to the challenges of the faith. Let us review some of these tensions.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

44 Karl Barth biography. Accessed on May 1st, 2010 from http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Karl_Barth.

45 Villafañe, *Seek the Peace*, 3.

46 H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Collins, 1956), 29.

The ministry of the Puerto Rican/Latino church navigates in a highly Western individualistic culture⁴⁷ that makes it hard to understand the biblical concept of the individual in the community. Mott stated it well:

Those who have been raised in Western culture with its heritage of individualism have difficulty in grasping the biblical perspective of the person in society ... The Bible's view of the person as flesh and as body promotes an understanding of the individual as living in solidarity with the social group to which he or she belongs ... It was to a community that the life-giving Law and Covenant were given. The New Covenant is proclaimed by a new community ... Reliance upon individual change ignores the objective reality of social life and social evil... our personalities do not develop in isolation from social influence.⁴⁸

My experience informs me that this individualism informs the structures and practices of most Hispanic/Latino churches in America, although in contrast in some way to the chart previously mentioned. Their organizational frameworks and habits correspond to a personal, vertical and inner-directed spiritual dimension. Thus, the social, horizontal and outer-directed dimension is neglected. Villafañe explains:

The missing dimension of social transformation/piety (which includes social witness, social service, and social action, and is thus outer-directed and horizontal) as “bona fide” spirituality has often been excluded from an authentically biblical and evangelical definition of spirituality. The call is to redefine and reappropriate from Scripture and from the rich heritage of the church a social spirituality that is consistent with the “following of Jesus.”⁴⁹

The paradox is that, while Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, clearly call us to serve others and to live in community, various churches and leaders today remain silent about social justice issues and/or promote church growth programs and wealth and health doctrines⁵⁰ that celebrate the individualism that feeds Western society. The task and challenge is how to reinvent⁵¹ the Hispanic/Latino urban church in the midst of great transformational societal change so that it will be biblically true to its message and mission, thus having a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension. Calling for these dimensions demands that spiritual formation be informed by a holistic and collective *modus operandi*. Nevertheless, collectivism should not be stressed without crushing or violating the individuality of God's children.

Process vs. Content

Any discussion of spiritual formation also demands that one closely examines and attends to both process and content. In the larger culture, on the content dimension, theologians have noted that there is a general lack of courage to be protestant anymore (that is, to protest by affirming the historic truths of Christianity⁵² due to the Church's heavy emphasis on *sola cultura* versus *sola escritura*.) It has also been noted that, while many are going to protestant churches looking for the assurance of individual salvation, many mainstream evangelicals are escaping to the orthodox side in search of a sense of history and tradition that connects them with the teachings the spiritual

47 Robert N. Bellah, et. Al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

48 Steve Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 119-120.

49 Villafañe, *Seek the Peace*, 13.

50 See David Van Biema & Jeff Chu, “Does God Want You to be Rich?” *Time* 168:12 (Fall, 2006).

51 See Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

52 David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

giants preserved, practiced and passed along and with the practices, symbols, rituals, places and events that accompanied their faith practices.⁵³

In the process dimension, leaders seeking to provide spiritual formation must be aware of market church growth strategies that short circuit development and maturity. Spiritual formation is not a linear, mechanical formula. It is a process. Quick fixes and one-size fits all programs and systems deny the Christian opportunities to reflect. Further, market- and me-centered strategies focus on human achievements and image and these neglect the creation of God, the need to be “earthly,” as retired pastor and scholar Eugene Peterson⁵⁴ brilliantly puts it in his writings. These strategies may disparage a holistic understanding of the Christian life as well as a comprehensive framework of God’s plan as revealed and detailed in the Holy Scriptures (Creation, Fall, Salvation and Redemption). But just such a comprehensive framework provides the ground for a metanarrative or worldview under which some of the cultural tensions mentioned in this article can be re-negotiated and even reconciled. In that light, knowledge must be processed and tested through the biblical filter. Methods should be reinvented, reoriented and reframed to communicate the Gospel to our contemporary society without diluting the Gospel’s truths. The challenge of balancing process and content is one that is enduring. The church must be equipped to provide every believer with knowledge from the Bible, history and other fields to help each describe human nature and experience. The Church should also be empowered to redefine and reformulate methods that allow for the transmission of timeless truths and principles in ways that are not authoritative and imposing. In short, spiritual formation attends to both the “what” and “how” in pursuit of the delivery of answers in a question-asking paradigmatic manner (that is, getting to the principle or truth at hand by posing a problem or issue with an inductive manner rather than in a propositional-deductive approach).

Diversity vs. Commonality

Spiritual formation is aware of the diversity of the church. It is fully cognizant of the patterns and assumptions that derive from one-size-fits-all or group thinking. Rather, spiritual formation is fully incarnational.⁵⁵ While on the one hand the aim of spiritual formation is unchangeable, as the characters of God and the Holy Scriptures are unchangeable, disciple-making takes place in a pluralistic and ever changing society.⁵⁶ This implies that one recognizes that in a pluralistic society development and growth inherent in the spiritual formation process is mediated by one’s cultural identity.⁵⁷ This means that spiritual formation is not and should not be used as an imperialistic tool for the colonization of the mind and the genocide of the will and the soul.⁵⁸ On the other hand, diversity does not cancel oneness or our identity in Christ. Paul wrote that there is neither Jew nor Greek. That is, ethnic identity does not supersede identity in Christ. That would be idolatry. Spiritual formation is a process that is Christ-and-cross-centered and ignited by brotherly love, but that is particularly appropriated within the cultural milieu that one lives in and identifies with. In short, spiritual formation should deny assimilation to a dominant culture, while it should affirm integration to a single Lord and Savior.

53 Brian McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008); Peter E. Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1992).

54 See Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Eugene H. Peterson, *The Wisdom of Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

55 Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Eldin Villafañe, *Fé, Espiritualidad y Justicia: Teología Posmoderna de un Boricua en la Diáspora* (Río Piedras, PR: Palabra Y Más, 1993).

56 Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

57 Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

58 Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990); Justo L. González, *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

Structural vs. Cultural

Spiritual formation faces the tension between structure and culture. Structure means schedules, programs, procedures, rules, policies, arrangements, departments, protocol, etc. On the other hand, “culture” refers to beliefs, norms, assumptions and ideas. Spiritual formation needs both. The problem is that there is a tendency in contemporary America for instant-gratification and quick-fix culture to change the structure without examining the assumptions and the norms and vice versa-referring to the beliefs of the believers who are the insiders of organizations (churches in this case). For example, you can add extra time to a Sunday school class, add another weekly service and mandate a total restructuring of ministry positions. However, these changes will not guarantee that people will tinker with, let alone change, their positions, ways and convictions about how they perceive the Holy Spirit is guiding them to do ministry. An example from the contemporary church is the adoption of cell groups. Churches organize and design small weekly group home/church studies and worship sessions. The immediate purpose is to bring the church out of the four walls. The ultimate goal is to accomplish the Great Commission services. Although this ministry approach has proven to give great results, it may not lead to discipleship and bring the believer in closer contact with the teachings of the early church, the practice of the spiritual disciplines and the exercise of social justice/service to the surrounding community. It may only serve as a marketing or management strategy. A broader perspective is thus needed. Spiritual formation demands not only the restructuring of the church to the times we live in, but also its reculturing.

Roots: History vs. The Present

Spiritual formation in the present world must confront the “presentism” that constantly bombards the walls of the church. By “presentism,” I mean the immediacy and the “now-perspective” that emerges out of pressing concerns. I have experienced the Hispanic/Pentecostal church closely for most of my walk with the Lord and I have witnessed that the church sometimes functions as though there is no historical background. I have seen churches that have become corporate conglomerates, or holy/evangelism clubs in my native Puerto Rico. I have also witnessed how popular “Christian” music has made its way into the church. I have nothing against these approaches if they are employed to reach the reluctant and sophisticated. However, the problem is that many in the church do not promote a culture that appreciates the rich history of the church. For example, I believe that many popular Christian writers represent excellent starters for the beginning Christian. However, the problem that I see is that many Christians when challenged about what they believe, why, how they know and the reasons they live the way they do cannot present and defend their faith. This is not a surprise when their reading is based on the latest “spiritual” marketplace bestseller.

Conclusion

I have described what I perceived as some of the tensions the Christian church faces in its spiritual formation mandate. One recurring theme throughout these tensions is whether those of us who love the Lord and His house are at the center or in the margins of contemporary American society. Given the spirit of the age today in this Post-Constantine era, we often find ourselves in the margins in the public square. God is private or even unconstitutional.⁵⁹ Spiritual formation goes against the very fabric of the cultural forces that govern and dominate our community. However, as fallen human beings, we face a great temptation to be at the center, to be known and noticed in both society and church. We have to be careful. We must be wise to manage scriptural admonitions that pull us to the other side. The crucial thing is that we never lose sight of Jesus’ way.⁶⁰ We can adopt certain practices to conduct our lives and do ministry and end sacrificing the

⁵⁹ Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law & Education* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

end of holiness in the process of doing those means. The goal of spiritual formation should not be short circuited and cannot be fully grasped by the mere adoption and focus on a method. Let us keep in mind that tensions will always be with us.

During my own spiritual journey, I have learned many things. Specifically, I have learned the art of listening. I have once again been reminded that part of learning is unlearning and this often makes one feel uncomfortable. It is painful to debate or witness because one is forced to reexamine what has been poured into one for years since early schooling or child-rearing days. Critical thinking and juxtaposing issues is (at least to me) great sources of spiritual renewal and empowerment. They generate within me a greater appreciation of not only Jesus' words, but also the commands and demands of a God that is loving and merciful towards His creation. They help me acquire a sense of mission, commission, incarnation and empowerment, confidence and commitment as a disciple of Jesus.⁶¹ Perhaps, the most stimulating learning experience in seminary and graduate school is the privilege and opportunity of sitting next to a number of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds as well as ministerial positions and walks in life and so the honor to develop and cultivate life-long spiritual friendships. Spiritual friendship not only cracks the dichotomies of secular vs. spiritual, but also the system- and - self-imposed hierarchies that compartmentalize our lives. My hope is that I have exchanged ideas in a learning community and in a spiritually friendly climate employing the proper tools to help others become disciples of Christ.

Despite the conflicting values and morals of our societies, the church has a great opportunity today to conduct its spiritual formation mission and mandate. Spiritual formation demands the acknowledgement of the postmodern condition, the urban context and particular identities. Crisis is the time of opportunity. The church should be cognizant of the people it serves, the context and the spirit of the age. The church must also confront the tensions it faces as it seeks to form its people spiritually. Confronting and navigating tensions will lead to a healthy and balanced church and to disciples that conform to Jesus (Rom. 8:29). Neglecting these principles may cause us to degenerate into an acceptable and even popular church. Further, spiritual formation may be denied and delayed since by implication it refers to a holistic and organic learning process that makes specific and unique demands aimed at bringing and building men and women unto the *Imago Dei* in a world characterized by a universe of competing, alternative and fragmented superficial tendencies and images.

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⁶¹ See Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 86-89, for how the prayer of the Lord can generate this sense of mission and empowerment.

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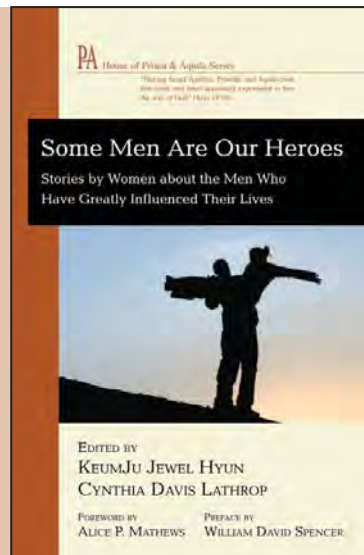
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The Kingdom of God in Yurts: Christianity among Mongols in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

MARK CHUANHANG SHAN¹

Today, people often believe that the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were nomadic barbarians who conquered great, civilized nations, such as China, Uyghur Empire, Xia, Iran, Iraq, and Russia. Yet, many do not know about the Christian civilization of the Mongols, especially in their royal Khanates families. Further, many Protestants identify the entrance of Christianity in China with Robert Morrison in 1807,² but Christians and Christianity were influential much earlier.

Two branches of Christianity, the Nestorian Church and the Roman Catholic Church, played important religious, social, and political roles in the Mongol Empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Nestorian Christians entered the Mongol Empire as a result of a Mongol military conquest of Nestorian peoples. Roman Catholic Christians were sent into the Mongol empire as ambassadors and missionaries because of the fear of conquest. In this essay, we will examine the background of the Mongols' own adaptation of Christianity in Yellow Yurts,³ in light of the Nestorian revivals in the Mongol Empire and the influence of Roman Catholic ambassadors of Western Christendom.

In the times of archers and riders, nomads lived on the vast steppes of Asia and Russia, as French historian René Grousset has pointed out. They established empires and constantly threatened and invaded the areas of developed historical civilizations such as China, Persia, India and Europe, "reducing the civilized worlds to a heap of ruins within only a few years."⁴ Among those nomadic barbarians, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongols of north Asia proved a major force when led by Chingis Khan and his successors, stretching the tip of their sword westward into Austria as far as Klosterneuburg (spring of 1242),⁵ eastward into Korea (1241) and China (1279),⁶ and southwards to the Persian Gulf and the Indus River.⁷ Facing a dangerous threat in its history, with the difficult experience of converting and mastering barbarians, Christendom in the West took a courageous step and sent out its bravest missionaries to the heart of the oriental, barbarian world with both religious and political purposes. To their surprise, the Catholic missionaries found Nestorian Christianity (their old heretic enemy back to the fifth century) was already quite influential among those barbarian Mongols.

I. The Background of the Mongols

Mongols, called Tartars by the West, together with Turks in the fifth century, were two major

1 This article develops an essay submitted (12/17/2007) for Boston University School of Theology's History of Christian Mission class taught by Dr. Dana Robert.

2 For example, Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W. Lotz, Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1985), 647. They also note the outreach of Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), 514.

3 All the Janghiz-Khanite princes in the Mongol Empire were residents in the Yellow (Golden) Residence, so in this article it refers to royal families. René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 269.

4 Grousset, *Empire*, vii.

5 John of Plano Carpini, in Christopher Dawson, ed., *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. a nun of Stanbrook Abbey (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), xiii.

6 Grousset, *Empire*, 259, 288.

7 Dawson, *Mongol*, xii.

forces on the Asian steppes after the Hun who was also called Hu or Xiongnu by the ancient Chinese.⁸ From the middle of the sixth century, after defeating the Mongols, Turks became the master of Asia's steppes and of its empires.⁹ In a. d. 744, one of the three major Turkic nations, Uyghurs (or Uigurs), united Asia's steppes with the establishment of Orkhon Khanate¹⁰ and reached the climax of becoming the most civilized nation on the Russian and Asian steppes. The Uyghurs were loyal clients and allies of the Tang Dynasty of the Chinese Empire,¹¹ which was the most powerful nation in Asia at that time. In a. d. 840, the Uyghur Empire fell under the attack of the barbarian Kirghiz Turks from the north so the Uyghur Turks escaped westward into the northern Tarim oases¹² and Turkicized the area,¹³ which became known as East Turkestan in the West and South Xinjiang in China today.

In a. d. 924, the Khitan Mongols defeated the Kirghiz Turks and retook the Mongolian steppes. With the establishment of the Liao Dynasty they assimilated into Chinese culture.¹⁴ In 1125, Jurchid Tungusk, the "sheer barbarians," as described by Chinese and Korean ambassadors, allied with the Song Dynasty of China, conquering the Khitan Kingdom and establishing "a regular state with a Chinese facade."¹⁵ Khitans escaped westward and continued as the West Liao Dynasty in today's Xinjiang and part of central Asia. About 1167, Chingis Khan was born among the Mongols.¹⁶ These were the Mongols proper "in the restricted and historical sense of the word," living in the northwest of modern Outer Mongolia, between the Onon River and the Kerulen River.¹⁷ In the spring of 1206, Chingis Khan finished the unification of the Mongolian steppe with the conquest of all the Mongol and Turkic tribes.¹⁸ He was now ready to set his followers and successors on the greatest military conquest in the world.

He initially aimed at conquering northern China with an attack on Xi-xia, the last Caucasian kingdom (in the conjuncture of Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia in China today), founded by Tangut of the Indo-Europeans.¹⁹ After the kingdom submitted, in 1211, Chingis Khan led his army to attack the Jurchid Tungusks and took over the capital, Beijing city, with a great massacre in 1215.²⁰ The sack of Beijing proved that in comparison with the Khitan Mongols of the tenth century, or even the Jurchid Tungusk of the twelfth, the Chingis Khanites were far more barbarous.²¹ After that, Chingis Khan embarked on his ambitious conquest westward with a quick conquest of the West Liao Dynasty of Kara Khitan by his famous general Noyan Jebe in 1218.²² In 1220, marching westward, Chingis Khan totally destroyed the Khwarizmian Empire, a Turkic nation without any Turkic culture but with an Iranian and Islamic culture.²³

The Chingis Khanic destructions continued across the Hindu Kush into North-West India.²⁴ At the same time, the two best generals of Chingis Khan, Jebe Noyan and Subotai Ba'atur, raided

8 Grousset, *Empire*, 19, 80.

9 Ibid., 82.

10 Ibid., 113.

11 Ibid., 114.

12 Ibid., 124-25.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 128.

15 Ibid., 136.

16 Ibid., 199.

17 Ibid., 193.

18 Ibid., 216.

19 Ibid., 226. Grousset thought Tangut were of Tibetan stock. I argue they were of Indo-European stock in my book *History of Christianity in Xinjiang, China, with a general history background* (Boston: Chinese Christian Theological Association, 2009), 40.

20 Ibid., 230.

21 Ibid., 231.

22 Ibid., 236.

23 Ibid., 236-37.

24 Dawson, *Mongol*, xi.

Persia, the Christian nation Georgia, and south Russia, and defeated Russia in May 1222.²⁵ In 1225, Chingis Khan went back to Mongolia and died in August 1227, while attacking the Tibetan kingdom of Tangnut once again.²⁶ In the spring of 1229, the third son of Chingis Khan, Ugedey (or Ogodai), succeeded in continuing his father's plan of conquests and destructions.²⁷ He first moved to the south and destroyed the area of the newly recovered Jurchid Tungusk Kingdom (north China today) in March 1234. Then he launched the war southward in 1234 and his successor finally conquered South Song Dynasty of China in 1279 after forty-five years of hard battles.²⁸

When Chingis Khan was still alive, the Mongolian Empire stretched from the Pacific to the Black Sea and was divided into five administrative areas under the dominance of Chingis Khan's three sons and brothers. The western part from the Irtysh River, the Russian Steppe which later became Kipchak-Khanite, was governed by the first son Jochi. The southwestern part, including central Asia (which later became Jagatai-Khanite), was controlled by the second son, Jagatai. The northern part was administrated by the third son, Ugedey (or Ogodai), who was the Great Khan of the later Mongolian Empire. The northeastern part, the heart of the Empire, was controlled and guarded by the youngest son Tolui, and, finally, the two brothers of Chingis Khan shared the most eastern area of Mongolia (Jilin, China today) by the Pacific.²⁹

Mongols did not forget the West. In 1236-1237, their main forces attacked and methodically destroyed the Russian cities and systematically massacred their residents.³⁰ In the winter of 1240-1241, on December 6th, Kiev, the mother of Russian cities, was destroyed, and then the Mongols crossed the frozen Vistula in February 1241 and advanced into Poland, finally defeating its western allies, entering Hungary and even reaching Austria, arriving at Neustadt (near Vienna) in July 1241. Finally, they rode north into Austria as far as Klosterneuburg in March 1242.³¹ At this point, the death of Ugedey Khan, on December 11, 1241, "caused the withdrawal of the Mongol armies, at least as far as Russia in 1242."³² However, Batu inherited control of the realm of his father, Jochi,³³ and still remained encamped on the lower Volga.³⁴

By this time, through these conquests and empire constructions, in their constant encounters with other cultures, Mongols were in a steady process of civilizing away from sheer barbarianism. Among the conquered civilizations, Khitan Mongols and Uyghur Turks, the two most civilized peoples of the Asian steppes, significantly influenced the Mongol Empire, especially during Chingis Khan's time. The Khitans initiated the Chingis-Khanite Empire into Chinese administration especially of the tax collection system, and the Uyghurs shared their whole heritage of Nestorian, Manichean, and Syriac traditions with the Mongols. With the help of the Uyghurs, the Mongol Empire derived the framework of their civil administration and writing language using the Uyghur alphabets.³⁵

Other Turkic tribes, such as Keraites and Naimans, also influenced the Mongols, especially their royal families, significantly by introducing them to Nestorian Christianity. With a policy of religious tolerance, the Mongol Empire was remarkably open to almost all the world religions, including Nestorian and Catholic Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, alongside the Mongol traditional Shamanism.

25 Ibid.; Grousset, *Empire*, 245-46.

26 Grousset, *Empire*, 247-48.

27 Ibid., 256.

28 Ibid., 258-59.

29 Grousset, *Empire*, 253-55 for the whole paragraph.

30 Dawson, *Mongol*, xiii.

31 Ibid.; Grousset, *Empire*, 266-67.

32 Dawson, *Mongol*, xiv; Grousset, *Empire*, 267.

33 Grousset, *Empire*, 254.

34 Dawson, *Mongol*, xv; Grousset, *Empire*, 268.

35 The whole paragraph refers to Grousset, *Empire*, 250-52.

II. Christianity in Yellow Yurts: the Nestorian Revivals

Before the first Catholic missionaries were sent to the Mongols, Nestorian Christianity³⁶ was popular in the Mongol Empire court among the royal families at the early part of the thirteenth century. A few Nestorian Turkic tribes were conquered and subjected by the Mongols of Chingis Khan, so a number of the Christian Turkic princesses married into the Mongol royal family. Because of the influence of these women and some prominent male Christians serving in the Mongol court as high level ministers, Nestorian Christianity had a great influence even in politics. A number of Mongol Khan mothers, wives, and children were Christian.

A Nestorian Tablet dug up near Xin-an city, Shaanxi of China, officially records the early history of the Nestorian mission to the Far East in the Chinese Tang Dynasty. The mission started in a. d. 635 and was welcomed by the Emperor Tai-zong, but Emperor Wu-zong forbade it in 845. All of the foreign missionaries were expelled.³⁷ After that, Nestorians seemed to disappear in East Asia. Then, after one and a half centuries, according to the thirteenth century historian, the Jacobite Gregory Bar Hebraeus, some unknown Nestorian lay missionaries, who were Christian merchants engaged in trade with the tribes on the Mongolian steppe, began to convert a Turk-Mongol tribe called the Keraites who lived in the eastern part of the Mongol steppe (or Kereyid, or Kerayit, or Kerait) through its Khan.³⁸ As the result of the mission, according to a letter to the Nestorian patriarch John VI in Baghdad, dated 1009, the Kerait Khan and 200,000 of his tribesmen were baptized.³⁹ This event led to the Nestorian Christianity revivals in the Mongol Empire about two centuries later.

Temujin, the later Jenghiz Khan, was a vassal of the Christian Kerait tribe at the beginning.⁴⁰ In 1203, as Jenghiz Khan's power and ambition grew, a conflict between him and Kerait Wang-Khan broke out, which Jenghiz Khan won.⁴¹ As a result, the Kerait tribe submitted, but a more important series of historical events occurred. Jenghiz Khan married the eldest daughter of Jagambu (Wang-Khan's brother). His eldest son, Jochi, married the second daughter and his youngest son, Tolui, married the third daughter—the youngest Nestorian princess Sorghaqtani (or Sorkaktani-beki).⁴² Sorghaqtani later became the Christian mother of four imperial sons, the Grand Khan (Mongka)⁴³ of the Mongols, the emperor of China (Kublai),⁴⁴ the Ilkhan (Hulagu)⁴⁵ of Persia, and the youngest son Aria-boga, who became the governor of the native Mongol land and resided in the capital Karakorum.⁴⁶

36 J. N. D. Kelly explains that Nestorius, enthroned as bishop of Constantinople on A. D. April 10, 428, claimed that in Jesus "divinity and humanity...must have existed side by side, each retaining its peculiar properties and operation unimpaired." So, to him, it was inappropriate to talk about Mary as bearing God in her womb—only the man Jesus could be said to be born—and "he objected to...speaking of God" as "dying" on the cross. To the orthodox, this sounded too adoptionist—as if the Christ spirit flew onto Jesus at the baptism and off at the crucifixion—which was reminiscent of the heretical views that Theodotus, a Byzantine leather-merchant, taught in Rome around A. D. 190. But Nestorius did not go that far. Influenced by Platonism, he considered the divine nature to be "impassible" (without emotions or suffering), but always "existing in 'the man.'" As the human nature of Jesus struggled to be born, was tempted, and struggled through life and death, the divine nature stood by within him untouched: "the two natures of the incarnate Christ remained unaltered and distinct in the union." Nestorius is quoted to have preached, "I hold the natures apart," *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 310-13, 116. Since, to him, if Mary were seen to be "God's mother," that would imply she was divine and since he still insisted that the Lord Jesus Christ be worshiped as one person, some feel Nestorius was more a victim of politics than of theological disagreement and point out that Martin Luther was sympathetic to his viewpoint.

37 Qian-zhi Zhu, *Nestorian Christianity in China* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1998), 73, 75.

38 Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume I: Beginnings to 1500* (Marynoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 400.

39 Ibid.

40 Grousset, *Empire*, 200.

41 Ibid., 209.

42 Ibid., 212; Moffett, *History*, 402.

43 Grousset, *Empire*, 274.

44 Ibid., 282.

45 Ibid.

46 Moffett, *History*, 402, saying only three sons instead of four is not accurate, refer to Grousset, *Empire*, 285.

Beside the Keraites, two other Nestorian tribes, the Turkic-Mongol Naiman (a majority of whom were Christians), were living in and controlling the western part of the Mongol Steppe,⁴⁷ and the Ongut Turks were living in the south-east border (north of the Modern Chinese province of Shan-xi).⁴⁸ In 1203, as the last surviving kingdom controlled the western Mongol steppe after the conquest of the Kerait, the Naiman united all the scattered tribes to make war on Jenghiz Khan, but Onguts, a vassal of the Jin (Jurchid Tungusk) Empire, joined the side of Jenghiz Khan.⁴⁹ In 1204, the Naiman allies were defeated.⁵⁰ Jenghiz Khan married his daughter, Alaghai-baki, to the second Ongut Christian prince, Pa-yao-ho, to show his gratitude.⁵¹ The later Ongut princes continued to pursue marriages with the princesses of the Jenghiz-Khanite family.⁵²

According to Syriac etymology, the Mongols called Nestorian Christianity *tarsa* and *arkagun* or *arka'un*; the Nestorian priests and monk were called *rabban-arkagun* and the bishops *marhasia*.⁵³ The name *tarsa* was also mentioned in the Chinese name (达婆) with a similar pronunciation (da-suo) in the Nestorian Tablet and the name *arkagun* in Chinese history books as 也里可温.⁵⁴ Because of the Christians in the Mongol royal families, Nestorian Christianity enjoyed a revival in the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth century. Nestorian Christianity used Syriac as its official language.

In 1229, according to the wishes of Jenghiz Khan, his third son Ogodai became the Great Khan of the Empire.⁵⁵ He put Nestorian Kerait Chinqai, "whom Jenghiz Khan already honored," into the position of the Empire chancellor.⁵⁶ In August 1246, the son of Ogodai and Toragana (probably a Naiman Christian), Guyuk, became the third Great Khan with the help of his mother, who was the regent of the empire after the death of her husband.⁵⁷ According to the witness of the Franciscan John of Plano Carpini, the Nestorians celebrated mass before Guyuk's yurt (or tent-like dwelling), and the Khan's chief ministers, tutor, and the Kerait Chancellor were all Nestorian Christians.⁵⁸

In 1251, Mongka, the eldest son of the Kerait Christian princess Sorghaqtani, with the crucial help of his mother and his cousin Batu (the second son of the eldest son of Jenghiz Khan),⁵⁹ became the fourth Great Khan of the Mongol Empire.⁶⁰ Because of his mother's Nestorian faith, Mongka favored the Nestorian faith and he appointed a Nestorian, again a Kerait, Bolghai, as his chancellor.⁶¹ According to William of Rubruck's account, at the great court festivals, the Nestorian priests were admitted first to bless the Khan's cup, then followed by Muslim clergy, Buddhist and Daoist monks. Sometimes Mongka himself went to church services with his Nestorian wife.⁶² Christianity was also rooted in the royal house of Kipchak-Khanite; Sartaq, the son of the Khan Batu, and Coyat, one of the principal men in the court, were Nestorians.⁶³

In 1253, as a fulfillment of his grandfather Chingis Khan's ambition of conquest of the world, Mongka sent his younger brother Hulegu to conquer Persia and another younger brother Kublai with himself to conquer China.⁶⁴ Hulegu started out the conquest at once, with his best general,

47 Grousset, *Empire*, 190.

48 Ibid., 213.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 216.

51 Ibid., 301.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 300.

54 Qian-zhi Zhu, *Nestorian*, 175.

55 Grousset, *Empire*, 256.

56 Ibid., 257.

57 Ibid., 268-69.

58 Ibid., 270.

59 Ibid., 273-74.

60 Moffett, *History*, 422.

61 Grousset, *Empire*, 275.

62 Ibid., 280.

63 Ibid., 396, 277.

64 Ibid., 282.

Ked-Buka (the Bull), a Nestorian Christian, as the commander of the Mongol army's vanguard.⁶⁵ Hulegu's wife Dokuz was a zealous Christian, who traveled with a portable Nestorian chapel on a wagon.⁶⁶ As the armies moved west, "increasing numbers of troops from the Christian tribes of central Asia and southern Russia joined them."⁶⁷ In 1258, the Mongol army stormed Muslim dominated Baghdad, which was also the headquarters of the Nestorian Church with Makika II as its patriarch.⁶⁸ In the great massacre of all the inhabitants, only those who took refuge in the church of the Nestorian patriarch Makika II, and those protected by the queen Dokuz, were spared.⁶⁹ After the conquest of Persia, during the first thirty-seven years reign of Hulegu's family, the Nestorian church enjoyed royal protection from Islamic hostility and favor during the short time of prosperity.⁷⁰ All the eastern Christian communities (Armenian, Nestorian and Jacobite) respected Hulegu and Queen Doquz as "the two great stars of the Christian faith" and "another Constantine, another Helen."⁷¹ Their son Abaka (1265-1282), beside his East Syrian Christian wife Kotai, also married another Chalcedonian Christian woman, Mary, the daughter of the Byzantine emperor of Constantinople, Michael Palaeologus.⁷² But the golden time for the Nestorian church ended when Hulegu's great-grandson Ghazan converted to Islam in 1295.⁷³

In 1259, at the same time, Mongka and Kublai were in the process of conquering China. One year after their brother Hulegu conquered Baghdad in Persia, Mongka died of dysentery during the siege of a city in the Sichuan province.⁷⁴ In 1260, Kublai proclaimed himself the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire.⁷⁵ In 1275, the Nestorian patriarch of Baghdad established an archbishopric in Beijing.⁷⁶ In 1279, Kublai Khan conquered all of China and positioned himself as the emperor of the twenty-third Chinese dynasty, where he took the name Yuan and took up residence in the capital of Khanbalik (Beijing).⁷⁷ The personal guard of Kublai and his successors in Beijing included 30,000 Christian Alans of the Greek site, originally from Caucasus.⁷⁸ Similar to his brother Hulegu in Persia, Kublai also was brought up by their Christian mother Sorghaqtani and favored Nestorian as well as Catholic Christianity during his reign, in spite of his public preference for Buddhism.⁷⁹ In addition, a Nestorian named "Er-sa" (in Chinese characters-the name of Jesus in the Uyghur Turkic language), probably from Syria, occupied an important position in the Yuan dynasty and later became the commissioner for Christianity in 1291 and the minister of China in 1297.⁸⁰

The Travels of Marco Polo from 1271-1299 described the city of Samarkan (in Uzbekistan) of the Jagatai-Khanites as having many Nestorian Christians and a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, built by Prince Jagatai (the second son of Jenghiz Khan, who converted to Christianity and became ruler of central Asia, including today's Xinjiang, China).⁸¹ When the three Polos (Marco, his father, and uncle) traveled into the territory of Tenduk (the Shanxi province of China

65 Moffett, *History*, 422.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 423.

69 Ibid.

70 Moffett, *History*, 426; Grousset, *Empire*, 355-56, 378.

71 Ibid. 367.

72 Moffett, *History*, 427; Grousset, *Empire*, 368, describes Mary as a *despoina* ("virgin"); Dale T. Irvin and Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, Volume 1 (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 460.

73 Moffett, *History*, 426.

74 Rene Grousset, 284.

75 Ibid., 285.

76 Ibid., 302.

77 Ibid., 288.

78 Ibid., 304.

79 Ibid., 300.

80 Ibid., 304.

81 Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Old Chelsea Station, New York: Cosimo, 2006), xi, xv, 62.

today), which was controlled by the Ongut tribes, they witnessed that the Khan George was “a Christian and a priest” with “the greater part of the inhabitants being Christians.”⁸² The Polos also witnessed the religious piety of Kublai Khan, as he kissed the book of the four Gospels on Easter and Christmas and directed all the nobles who were present to do so as well.⁸³ Though Kublai Khan was quite liberal with respect to the other religions of the Muslims, Jews, and Shamanists, he evidently “regarded the faith of the Christians as the truest and the best, yet he refused to convert to Christianity.”⁸⁴ When Marco Polo’s father and uncle questioned him about that before their return to Europe, Kublai Khan answered that Christian ministers did not perform miracles to prove extraordinary powers, as those idolaters (Buddhists, etc.) did, so, if he professed to be a Christian, the nobles would suspect his judgment.⁸⁵ Kublai Khan entrusted to them letters to the Pope and to the other western rulers, asking them to send one hundred missionaries who were the best Christians in doctrine, theology, knowledge, law, wisdom, reason, and arts, to prove, and, thereby, convince his people that the Christian faith and religion is better than all the other religions.⁸⁶ Kublai told the Polos that he expected such missionaries could confront those idolaters and show greater spiritual power, and then he would accept Christian baptism.⁸⁷

In the wake of the Mongols, the Nestorian faith even became prominent in South China. Travelling down to South China, the Polos also witnessed many Nestorians and their churches.⁸⁸ In fact, six Nestorian Church buildings in *Zhenjiang*, and one in *Hangzhou*, two cities of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces today, that were built by the Nestorian vice governor, Mar Sargis, were appointed by Kublai Khan, with three more being constructed in Yangzhou.⁸⁹ According to the record of *Zhi Shun Zhenjiang History*, in Yuan China seventy-two Nestorian districts were established.⁹⁰ Quan-zhou harbor of the Fujian province at the southern point of China and the eastern end of the Ocean Silk Road might have been a great center of Nestorians according to the many Nestorian cemetery tablets and six Christian churches discovered there in the 1940s—1980s.⁹¹ After Kublai Khan’s death, Daoists and Buddhists from Zhenjiang accused the Nestorians in a civil court of converting Daoists and complained about the obvious popularity of the Nestorian church buildings, winning their cases.⁹²

In about 1278,⁹³ the Nestorian Uyghur Turks- Rabban Bar Sawma from Beijing and Rabban Markos from Kawshang (in Shanxi province today)-were sent by Kublai Khan to worship in Jerusalem, leaving from Beijing for a pilgrimage.⁹⁴ This event became an historical landmark in Nestorian Church history. Because of the war between Mongol Persia and Muslim Egypt, the two pilgrims were blocked on the way to Jerusalem, so they went instead toward Baghdad, where the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Denha, who had been appointed by the Nestorian queen Dokuz Khatun, welcomed them.⁹⁵ In 1281, after the death of the Patriarch, the thirty-five year old Markos was

82 Ibid., 97.

83 Ibid., 115.

84 Ibid., 116.

85 Ibid., 116-17.

86 Moffett, *History*, 445-46.

87 Polo, *Travels*, 117.

88 Ibid., 226.

89 Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2006), 219.

90 Qian-zhi Zhu, *Nestorian*, 183.

91 Ibid., 183 and the photos of illustration in the first part of the book; Baumer, *Church*, 219.

92 Baumer, *Church*, 219-20.

93 Dawson, *Mongols*, xxviii.

94 Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, KT., trans., *The Monks of Kublai Khan Emperor of China, or the History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Sauma, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khans to the Kings of Europe, and Markos who as Mar Yahbh-Allaha III Became Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in Asia* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1928), 6 (introduction). (This is a translation into English of an abridgement in Syriac by an unknown author of an account of the journeys of Rabban Sawma, written by him in Persian.)

95 Ibid.

elected to be the new Patriarch as Mar Yahbh-Allaha III (the new name Yahbh-Allaha was given by Denha, meaning “God gave him”)⁹⁶ until his death in November, 1317.⁹⁷

Then the new Ilkhan, Hulegu’s son Abaka (1265-1282), wanted to launch a crusade to Muslim Syria and Egypt, so he sent envoys to the Pope in Rome, James of Aragon, and to Edward I of England suggesting an alliance, but with no practical result.⁹⁸ The fourth Ilkhan, Hulegu’s grandson, Arghun (1284-1291), seriously considered seeking an alliance again with Christian Europe against the Muslim East to capture Jerusalem.⁹⁹ So, in 1285, he sent a letter to Pope Honorius IV with a detailed plan (the Latin translation has been preserved at the Vatican).¹⁰⁰ In 1287 (the 24th year of Yuan China),¹⁰¹ with the consent of Kublai Khan, he sent Raban Bar Sawma (who by then was a bishop in the Nestorian court) as an official ambassador to the Pope and the Christian kings of Europe journeying into Byzantium, Italy, France, and England.¹⁰² He was well received by Andronicus II in Constantinople, then stayed one year in Europe and visited Philip IV in Paris, British King Edward I (who even received communion from Rabban Sawma) in Gascony, and the newly elected Pope Nicholas IV from whom he received communion in Rome.¹⁰³ While in Rome, Rabban Bar Sawma showed his great knowledge, theology, belief, and eloquence through answering the questions of the Cardinals and winning a debate over them.¹⁰⁴ The biography of these two Uyghurs, Rabban Markos and Rabban Bar Sawma, in a Syriac version “provides a Mongol counterpart to William of Rubruck’s narrative of his embassy from St. Louis to Mongol Khan.”¹⁰⁵ Yet, the diplomatic efforts made by Arghun to Christian Europe, together with two more in 1289 and 1290, ended up with only assurances from the west, but no results.¹⁰⁶

Nestorian Christianity enjoyed these revivals because of favor from the Mongol royal families. It reached its zenith in the thirteenth century under the Patriarch Mar Yahbh-Allaha (Rabban Markos), who ruled the Church from Baghdad to Beijing in the Mongol Empire. At their root, these revivals basically were a woman’s movement with credit to the strong faith of the Christian mothers and the wives of the Mongol khans and princes. In 1246, when the first two ambassadors of the west, the Franciscan friars Lawrence of Portugal and John of Plano Carpini, sent by Pope Innocent IV in 1245, arrived at the Mongol imperial court, the great yellow yurts city (Golden Residence for the Golden Family of Jenghiz-Khan), they reported that the Nestorians celebrated mass before the Khan’s tent (yurt).¹⁰⁷

III. The Ambassadors of Western Christendom: Catholic Missions

As mentioned earlier, when the Mongols retreated from Hungary in 1242 because of the death of Ugedey Khan, the danger Western Christendom faced had not appeared completely, because Christian Russia was still occupied as a province of the Mongol Empire. The Mongols would come back once the succession of a new Khan was set up.¹⁰⁸ The new Pope, Innocent IV, however, recognized the whole picture and thus sent the first mission to the Mongols in 1245 “to avert the threatened danger.”¹⁰⁹ The Mongols remained basically unknown to the West before the first

96 Ibid., 6, 34-35.

97 Ibid., 49.

98 Moffett, *History*, 427.

99 Ibid., 433.

100 Grousset, *Empire*, 373.

101 Qian-zhi Zhu, *Nestorian*, 188.

102 Moffett, *History*, 432-34; Budge, *Monks*, 37-38.

103 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxix; Qian-zhi Zhu, *Nestorian*, 188.

104 Budge, *Monks*, 91-95.

105 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxviii.

106 Moffett, *History*, 434.

107 Dawson, *Mongol*, xv; Grousset, *Empire*, 270.

108 Dawson, *Mongol*,. xiv-xv.

109 Ibid., xv.

missionaries came back. After that, more mission trips were made to the Mongols by Franciscans and Dominicans.

The two Franciscan missionaries sent to the Mongols, Lawrence of Portugal and John of Plano Carpini during their mission from 1245-1247, brought a letter (two bulls [i.e., formal documents bearing the papal seal] enclosed) to the Mongol Khan.¹¹⁰ In the first bull, the Pope wrote about the theological doctrine of Catholic Christianity, and admonished the Mongol Khan to “acknowledge Jesus Christ the very Son of God” and worship Him “by practicing the Christian religion.”¹¹¹ In the second bull, the Pope addressed more political concerns, asking the Khan “what moved you to destroy other nations and what your intentions are for the future.”¹¹² Therefore, the mission was as much political as religious.¹¹³

The journey was incredibly long and trying with many life risks. Starting from Lyons, France, on April 16, 1245, they arrived at the Mongol Kipchak Khanate and were well received by the Khan Batu on the lower Volga on April 4, 1246.¹¹⁴ On July 22, they arrived at the newly elected Great Khan Guyuk’s court and met him.¹¹⁵ The Nestorian Christians in the Khan’s house told the Friars that they believed Guyuk was about to become a Christian, because “he maintains Christian clerics” and “always has a chapel before his chief tent.”¹¹⁶ On November 13, the friars set out on the return journey with a letter from Guyuk, as well as the translation, made by the help of a few people, such as the chancellor of the Khan, who was the Nestorian Kerait Chinqai, Guyuk’s tutor, Nestorian Qdaq, and his counselor the Syrian rabban-ata “who was in charge of affairs relating to his religion,” and a Christian Russian Knight Sangor.¹¹⁷ In the letter of 1246 to Pope Innocent IV, Guyuk argued that he was supported by God and threatened the Pope and the kings of the West to submit, with a seal in the name of the eternal Tengri (the Mongol’s traditional god) and Great Khan.¹¹⁸ After going back to the Pope, Friar John wrote his famous narrative so the west would gain first hand knowledge. An interpreter, another brother, Benedict the Pole, who joined their journey to the Mongols in Poland, also wrote a very short narrative about the journey.¹¹⁹

Because of the menacing tone in Guyuk’s letter, in 1247, Pope Innocent IV sent the second mission, obviously more political, carried out by the Dominicans this time, Friar Ascelin, Simon of Tournai, and three others.¹²⁰ On May 24, they reached the camp of the Kipchakhan Batu, west of the Caspian Sea.¹²¹ They went back to the Pope with a similar message as the first mission’s; yet the mission proved more meaningful, because in this mission the friars met an important officer of Guyuk, Aljigiday, who was interested in establishing relations with the Christians of the West.¹²² Aljigiday sent back two Mongol envoys (one of them, Sargis, was a Christian) with the friars in 1248 and the Pope received them.¹²³ At the same time, Aljigiday took more steps to establish a friendly relationship with the French King St. Louis (Louis IX), through sending the two envoys, David and Mark, with a letter saying the Great Khan intended to protect all the Christians and help West Christendom to take back Jerusalem.¹²⁴

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid., 75.

112 Ibid., 76.

113 Moffett, *History*, 406.

114 Grousset, *Empire*, 270; Dawson, *Mongol*, 55-56.

115 Dawson, *Mongol*, 60, 68.

116 Ibid., 68.

117 Ibid., 67, 69-70; Grousset, *Empire*, 270.

118 Dawson, *Mongol*, 85-86.

119 Ibid., 79.

120 Ibid., xviii.

121 Ibid., xix.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

Based on this last encouraging letter, the French King St. Louis sent a team of five envoys with two sergeants led by a Dominican who was in the former mission, Andrew of Longjumeau, with the Mongol envoys, back to the Mongol court, with many presents, including a yurt-chapel of scarlet cloth.¹²⁵ The envoys set out from Antioch in 1249,¹²⁶ and, after arriving, they were received by the Regent Ogul Gamish, the widow of Guyuk Khan (who had died in March or April 1248),¹²⁷ by the River Imil, south-east of Lake Balkash.¹²⁸ The Regent demanded submission and tributes from the French King with a warning of destroying them otherwise.¹²⁹ The message reached St. Louis in April 1251 in Caesarea.¹³⁰ But, beside this discouragement, St. Louis was comforted with the confirmation in the accounts of the existence of a large Christian (Nestorian) population among the Mongols,¹³¹ and he learned later that even the son of Batu Khan, Sartak (or Sartaq), was a Christian.¹³² Based on the encouraging part of the reports, St. Louis sent out another mission to see Sartak,¹³³ and the mission had a definitely more religious character than the former ones.¹³⁴

The mission team (four members) included one ambassador of the Pope, Friar John of Policarp,¹³⁵ and was led by the Franciscan William of Rubruck. It started out on May 7, 1253, entering the Black Sea from Constantinople.¹³⁶ When it reached the Mongols, William instructed some Mongols, including khans and other ethnic people they encountered, with the Christian faith and the Catholic doctrine.¹³⁷ He found that the Nestorian Christians in the Empire did not drink *comos*, the horse milk, which could make people drunk easily, or any wine.¹³⁸ They saw Sartak, the Nestorian prince of Batu Khan, and presented the letter from the King St. Louis, on August 1, 1253¹³⁹ (or July 31).¹⁴⁰ Then Sartak sent the mission team on to see his father, Batu Khan. When they saw Batu in his court, William explained to him the Christian doctrine of salvation.¹⁴¹ Then Batu ordered them to go eastward to the Great Khan, Mongka, the son of the Nestorian Kerait princess.¹⁴²

Before seeing Mongka, a Nestorian Christian who was the chancellor, Bolghai (*Bulgai*), examined them carefully with many questions.¹⁴³ On January 4 of 1254, they were taken into the court to see Mongka¹⁴⁴ and stayed for months. They went to the Nestorian chapel and church with Mongka, his wife, and their children to join the services there.¹⁴⁵ On the eve of Pentecost (May 30, 1254), by the command of the Khan, in Karakorum, in the presence of three arbiters sent by the Khan, a religious debate was held among the representatives of the three religions: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.¹⁴⁶ In the meeting, suggested and instructed by William, the Catholic

125 Ibid., xviii-xix.

126 Moffett, *History*, 407; Dawson, *Mongol*, xx, saying the journey started out in 1248, which is not accurate, cf., Moffet and Grousset, *Empire*, 272-73.

127 Grousset, *Empire*, 272.

128 Dawson, *Mongol*, xx.

129 Ibid.

130 Grousset, *Empire*, 273.

131 Dawson, *Mongol*, xx.

132 Ibid., *Mongol*, xxi.

133 Peter Jackson, trans., ed., with David Morgan, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990), 97; Dawson, *Mongol*, xxi; Grousset, *Empire*, 97.

134 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxi.

135 Ibid.; Jackson, *Mission*, 132.

136 Grousset, *Empire*, 276.

137 Jackson, *Mission*, 101, 103.

138 Ibid., 102, 104.

139 Ibid., 118.

140 Grousset, *Empire*, 277.

141 Jackson, *Mission*, 133.

142 Ibid., 134.

143 Ibid., 173.

144 Ibid., 176.

145 Ibid., 189-191.

146 Ibid., 229-30.

missionaries and Nestorian priest united together, allied with the Muslims (Saracens), to win over the Buddhist (*tuins*).¹⁴⁷ Then the Nestorians wanted to debate the Muslim, but the latter avoided the debate through answering that they “concede the Gospel was true” and even wish to die a Christian death.¹⁴⁸

On the day of Pentecost, William saw Mongka again and discussed with him, as a historical interview and sermon, about the Christian faith and doctrine. In his final words to the friar, Mongka showed himself most likely to be a liberal deist with a universalistic view and seemed to criticize Christianity for lacking religious tolerance.¹⁴⁹ After baptizing six people there¹⁵⁰ (on August 18, 1254), William of Rubruck left with a letter from Mongka to Louis IX and returned via Batu’s territory again.¹⁵¹ The friar arrived at Tripoli on August 15, 1255,¹⁵² and later he wrote the fullest narrative with the most authentic information on the Mongol Empire in its pre-Chinese phase.¹⁵³

Based on the political mission of the Nestorian Uyghur Rabban Bar Sawma to the West and the religious mission of William of Rubruck to the east, in 1289, Pope Nicholas IV sent the Franciscan John of Monte Corvino on a new mission to the Mongols, with letters to the Persian Ilkhan Argun in Baghdad, the Kaidu (Ugedey’s grandson) in Central Asia, and the Great Khan Kublai (who succeeded after Mongka’s death in 1259) in Beijing.¹⁵⁴

John finally arrived at Beijing via St. Thomas Church, India, where his fellow traveler Friar Nicholas died and was buried in 1291. John was received warmly by Kublai’s successor and grandson, Temur (1294-1307).¹⁵⁵ He tried to convince Temur to convert from idolatry, but without success.¹⁵⁶ John of Monte Corvino had to carry out the mission alone for twelve years with only help from his friend, the Italian merchant Pietro De Lucalongo. De Lucalongo donated money for one of the two church buildings Monte Corvino built, right in front of the Khan’s court, with a red cross on the top, where the Khan could hear the singing from the church.¹⁵⁷ In this period, according to John’s accounts, the Nestorian religious leader persecuted him through false witnesses.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, within six years (1299-1305), he baptized “about six thousand people.” He also converted the Ongut Nestorian Prince George (King Korguz), the son in-law of Temur Khan, to Catholicism. The Prince built a fine church with the name of “the Roman church,” and in one day he “converted several thousands of his people.”¹⁵⁹ By January 9 of 1305, John had translated “the whole of the New Testament and the Psalter” into the Mongol language.¹⁶⁰

John of Monte Corvino worked alone in Beijing for 16 years and achieved the most successful Catholic mission in Asia (1291-1328 or 1329). The Chinese Mongol mission continued to flourish for another forty years under him and his successors. Finally, in 1307, Rome remembered the existence of John and appointed him as Archbishop of Khanbalik (Beijing), as well as sent him the long expected helpers.¹⁶¹

In 1313, three Franciscans (Andrew of Perugia, Gerard, and Peregrine) sent by Pope Clement V arrived in Beijing to be John’s assistants; at the same time, the Pope also sent the brothers Thomas,

147 Ibid., 231.

148 Ibid., 234.

149 Ibid., 236-237.

150 Ibid., 253.

151 Grousset, *Empire*, 281.

152 Jackson, *Mission*, 269, 275.

153 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxi.

154 Ibid., xxxi.

155 Ibid., xxxii, 224; Grousset, *Empire*, 313.

156 Dawson, *Mongol*, 224.

157 Grousset, *Empire*, 314; Dawson, *Mongol*, 229.

158 Dawson, *Mongol*, 224.

159 Ibid., 225-226, 232; Grousset, *Empire*, 314.

160 Dawson, *Mongol*, 227.

161 Ibid., xxxiii for this whole paragraph.

Jerome, and Peter of Florence for missions. Jerome became archbishop in Crimea with jurisdiction over the Kipchak khanate. Gerard became bishop in Quan-zhou (Cayton or Zaytun) of south China and was succeeded by Peregrine and later by Andrew.¹⁶²

According to Peregrine's letter, they even could preach freely in the mosque to convert Muslims and likewise in the Buddhist temple.¹⁶³ But, according to Andrew's letter, none of the Muslims and Jews converted, and many idolators (Buddhists) were baptized yet they did not adhere to Christian ways.¹⁶⁴ According to Dawson, "as early as 1321, Thomas of Tolentino and his companion were martyred at Tana near Bombay on their way to join John of Monte Corvino in Beijing."¹⁶⁵

After John of Monte Corvino, another prominent Catholic missionary in Mongol China was the Franciscan Odoric of Pordenone (1265-1331), who arrived in Canton of south China via India in 1323, visited the Franciscan monastery in Quan-zhou, and then went northward to Beijing.¹⁶⁶ He witnessed the great success of the mission among Mongols in Beijing.¹⁶⁷ He left Beijing in 1328 and returned to Europe by way of Central Asia.¹⁶⁸

In 1333, after Rome learned of the death of John of Monte Corvino, it sent Friar Nicholas to replace the position of Archbishop, but he seemed to have died before reaching China, though the news of his arrival in Alimalik in Jagatay Khanate (Ili, Xinjiang today) reached Europe in 1338.¹⁶⁹ In 1339 (or 1338), Pope Benedict XII sent Franciscan Missionary John of Marignolli to China. In the spring of 1340, John passed by Alimalik and stayed there for a while.¹⁷⁰ During his stay, he regrouped the Christian community, which had been persecuted by a Muslim revolt, rebuilt (or built) a church, and baptized a great number of people there.¹⁷¹ He arrived in Beijing in 1342, bringing some gifts, including a big western horse from the Pope to the Mongol Emperor. He left China from Quan-zhou, sailing to India in 1347 and returned to Avignon in 1353.¹⁷²

In 1339 (or 1340), Franciscan Richard of Burgundy, sent by Pope Benedict XII to be a bishop of Alimalik, was martyred with a number of other Franciscan companions by the hands of Ili Muslims.¹⁷³ In 1362, the last Catholic Bishop of Zaytun, James of Florence, was martyred when the Chinese took over Beijing City. In 1369, the Christians were expelled from Beijing by Ming Chinese forces.¹⁷⁴ In 1370, Pope Urban V appointed a professor of the University of Paris, Guillaume of Prato, as archbishop of Beijing, and the next year he named Francesco of Prato as his legate to China, but the Mongol dynasty had just been overthrown by the Chinese Ming dynasty (1368-1644).¹⁷⁵

Therefore, because of the Muslim revivals, which were combined with intolerance in central Asia, and the Han Chinese revolt in China, having lost the protection from the declined Mongol Empire, the Catholic churches, together with the Nestorian churches, disappeared quickly in the tide of military violence. This also marked the end of the second presence of Christianity in the history of China. However, two hundred years later, at the end of the sixteenth century, Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits, came back to Beijing again.

Conclusion

162 Grousset, *Empire*, 314, for this whole paragraph.

163 Dawson, *Mongol*, 233.

164 *Ibid.*, 237.

165 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxxiv.

166 Grousset, *Empire*, 314-16.

167 *Ibid.*, 316-17.

168 *Ibid.*, 318.

169 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxxiii-iv; Grousset, *Empire*, 319.

170 Grousset, *Empire*, 319.

171 *Ibid.*, 342.

172 *Ibid.*, 319.

173 Grousset, *Empire*, 342.

174 Dawson, *Mongol*, xxxiv.

175 Grousset, *Empire*, 319.

The Mongol Empire came powerfully onto the world history stage, but did not last long (a century). The Nestorian churches in the East enjoyed revivals and reached their climax in church history because of the royal Nestorian women's movement in the Mongol court, especially through the great influence of the Kerait princess, Sorghaqtani. However, it is still mysterious how those Turkic tribes became Nestorianized so deeply that they even conquered the Mongol conqueror with their Nestorian faith and culture. The account about the lay Nestorian merchant converting the Kerait seems to lack convincing proof. Did those Nestorian missionaries expelled from the Tang Dynasty of China in a. d. 845 go northward into the Mongol Steppe and finally bring those Turkic tribes to Christianity?

Similarly, when the Catholic churches went to the Mongols and East Asia for the first time in history, they also enjoyed a great success through their unique Western political and religious identity. For this they were indebted to the Nestorian women in their yellow yurts. If the Polos had brought back the one hundred best missionaries to Beijing as Khan Kublai had requested, one wonders what would have been the history of the Mongols and of China?

Both Nestorian and Catholic churches fell in Asia when the Mongol Empire fell. Scholars debate about the reason from different perspectives, convincingly, or not, citing Nestorian Christianity being a state-religion, the spiritual and ethical corruption of the Nestorians, the Muslim and Chinese revolts, and so forth, as the reason for these churches ultimate failure to endure. However, I think the root problem of their failure could be that the rituals and doctrine-oriented Nestorian and Catholic faith was too rigid and abstract and without enough empirical application of the faith to appeal to grassroots people. They especially lacked the witness of God's mighty power in the name of Jesus Christ. Eastern people are used to their cultures and religions, which are function-oriented with applicable and practical methods for daily living, and witnessing the power of the divine being they worship.

Kublai Khan pointed that out to the Polos. When Niccolo and Maffeo of Marco Polo's family were about to leave China during the Yuan Dynasty of the Mongol Empire after having stayed in Khan's court for 17 years, they earnestly requested Kublai Khan to talk about what he thought about Christianity. It seemed to them that Kublai would think that belief in Christianity was the best, but Kublai had not openly expressed that he believed in Christianity. Before they left, Kublai made the following explanation: "You must have seen, Christians in this country are ignorant, incapable, they don't have the ability to perform divine miracles, but those who believe in idol-worshiping religions can do exceptional things. I sit in front of the table, they can make the cup in the lobby fly over and pour the liquor or drink into my mouth, I don't have to move my hands at all. . . . So, if I accepted baptism and Christianity, people would think I have committed a serious mistake."¹⁷⁶

Similarly, being disappointed with the Great Khan Mongka's stubbornness and his reluctance to convert to be Christian (though he favored Christianity mostly), after the last conversation with Mongka on the day of Pentecost, the Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck concluded sadly: "If I had possessed the power to work miracles, as Moses did, he might perhaps have humbled himself."¹⁷⁷

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¹⁷⁶ Polo, *Travels*, 116-117.

¹⁷⁷ Jackson, *Mission*, 239.

The Bank of Flux

MARK CHUANHANG SHAN

*I am in a flux,
ending nowhere,
the meaning of existence,
open to definition forever.*

*I am part of a flux,
the same yet different,
turbulent and calm,
flowing to somewhere,
for certain,
roaring towards a bank,
to which the flux owns its being.
Eternity stands,
calming the flux with an order.*

*The flux embraces,
but I reject it with gentle firmness,
with a hope,
flashing from my Beacon,
the Truth of Jesus Christ.*

Making Known the Unknown God: An Exploration of Greco-Roman Backgrounds Related to Paul's Areopagus Speech

JENNIFER CREAMER

How can an understanding of Greco-Roman backgrounds shed light on Paul's approach in his Areopagus speech in Acts 17? Paul, in this speech to Gentiles, took a completely different approach than he did with Jews in the Book of Acts. Whereas his aim with Jewish audiences was to prove from Scripture that Jesus was the Messiah, his aim with this Gentile audience was to persuade them of the realities of the gospel by employing concepts and ideas familiar to Greek thought. Indeed, there is no quotation of Old Testament Scripture at all in his oratory at the Areopagus. Yet, Paul makes his case against idolatry and in favor of the true God in such a way that certain conversions ensue. The purpose of this article is to explore some of the ways in which Paul's carefully crafted message engaged with the contemporary intellectual scene in Athens and how his Greek audience there might have understood his message based on its worldview. A primary focus will center on Stoic and Epicurean schools of thought. How did Paul interact with Greek culture in order to present the gospel? Toward addressing this question, after introducing the Athenian setting and the references to an "unknown god," we will survey a range of Greek literature on three key topics: the critique of traditional religion, the nature of God, and the immortality of the soul. As significant differences lie between the Stoic and Epicurean views of each of these topics, each will be considered. Throughout the discussion, it will become apparent that, although Paul often used the familiar in order to introduce the unfamiliar, he was not at all hesitant to proclaim truths boldly that would have not fit at all in his audience's cultural paradigm. Paul contextualized without compromise.

Introduction to the Athenian setting

After being expelled from three cities in Macedonia during his second missionary journey, Paul found himself in Athens. Athens was a city with a glorious past. It was the birthplace of the world's first democracy. It was the seat of political domination in the fifth century B.C. Athens towered over other cities in nearly every sphere of the arts, particularly in the Classical Period. It was the home of the Parthenon, built in honor of Athena in celebration of Athen's victory in the Persian Wars. It was the birthplace of the renowned tragic dramatists Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides as well as the satirist Aristophanes. The great historian Thucydides was from Athens. Not only famous for arts and culture, Athens was an epicenter for intellectual curiosity. Socrates had spent time voicing his ideas in the marketplace (Plato, *Apology* 17c). Plato, student of Socrates, created his Academy as an institution of higher learning. Aristotle, student of Plato, founded his Lyceum. Both of these schools were established in Athens hundreds of years before Paul's arrival. Alexander the Great, student of Aristotle, planted Greek culture across the whole empire. Although now dominated politically by the Romans, Greek culture reigned nonetheless from border to border of the empire. A Greek education became requisite for the Roman aristocracy by the first century B.C.¹

The Stoic and Epicurean schools also originated in Athens. Attracted to philosophy through the reading of books about Socrates that his father brought back from business trips, Zeno moved to Athens from Cyprus while in his early twenties. After years of study with Socratic philosophers, he became the founder of Stoicism. In this way, Stoicism traces back to Socrates himself. Zeno started his school of philosophy around 300 B.C. Originally called "Zenoians," the group soon

¹ Sarah Pomeroy, *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 473.

became known as the “Stoics,” so named after the Painted Stoa (open air stone building) in the Agora where they held their meetings. The draw of philosophy in Athens was strong, attracting internationals. Zeno’s successor, Cleanthes, came from Assos. Cleanthes’ successor, Chrysippus, came from Soli.² The centrality of Socrates’ teachings to the Stoic school was so fundamental that Philodemus commented several hundred years after Zeno’s time that they are “willing also to be called Socratics” (Philodemus, *De Stoicis XIII* 3).³

The distance between the Stoa in the Agora and Plato’s Academy of the fourth century B.C. was about two miles. In between the Stoa and the Academy, Epicurus met with students in his Garden. His voice was the voice of dissent. He did not like Aristotle and did not follow the teachings of Socrates. He was known for rudeness to his own teacher, Nausiphanes, who taught him atomism. Claiming to be self-taught, he founded his school in 306 B.C. Epicurus led his school with the strictest authoritarianism, forbidding anyone to disagree with his ideas.⁴

The Unknown God

In a city overflowing with idols, Paul began his speech necessarily with a disambiguation. Which God are we talking about here? Paul began his apologetic in Acts 17:22 by mentioning his exploration of the many religious objects in Athens. Within the spiritual morass he identified “an altar in which it had been inscribed, ‘To an unknown god.’” He used this as a launching pad for his speech. The statement that follows in verse 23, “Therefore, that which you worship without knowing, this I proclaim to you” would surely have attracted the attention of his audience, perhaps setting up a high expectation for those who regarded the discussion of new ideas as a national pastime (v. 21). Was their speaker about to unveil a great mystery by making the unknown known? And who was this unknown God? It may be that the Athenians were so concerned that all gods would be worshiped that they even set up altars to unknown gods, lest one might be left out by their ignorance. This thought may be supported by the reflections of Philostratus on Athenian piety. Writing in the second or third century A.D., he advises, “For it is wisest to speak well of all gods, and above all those in Athens, where altars are dedicated even to unknown gods” (*Life of Apollonius* 6.3, my trans.). Pausanias, in his second century A.D. travelogue, *Description of Greece*, narrated what he saw in Athens:

There is also another harbor belonging to the Athenians at Munychia, with a temple of Artemis of Munychia, and another at Phalerum, just as it was told to me before, and on its side a temple of Demeter. Here there is also a temple of Athena Sciras, and further off, of Zeus. And there are altars of gods called Unknown, and heroes and children of Theseus and Phalerus. This Phalerus, Athenians say, sailed with Jason into Colchis. (1.1.4, my trans.)

Although no such altar has been yet discovered in Athens, here we have an eyewitness. The very concept of having unknown gods shows that the Athenians were cognizant of not apprehending all truth. They were aware of an unknown realm.

Such a realm was explored in poetic verse by the first century writer Ovid. Completed in A.D. 7, Ovid’s mythical work, *Metamorphoses*, includes some familiar concepts from the first chapter of Genesis, albeit with great artistic license. The work begins with an unnamed god who creates the world. Later his tale unfolds as he follows the general idea of Hesiod’s *Theogony*. The Olympic gods are brought into being after the world is created. While the *Theogony* begins with Earth and Sky as the origin of the gods, no explanation is given for who created Earth and Sky. Is Ovid attempting to fill in this glaring gap in Hesiod’s narrative? Consider the following:

² Brad Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8-10.

³ As cited in Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 11.

⁴ J.M Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 2-9.

And when this God —which one is yet unknown—
 had carved asunder that discordant mass,
 had thus reduced it to its elements,
 that every part should equally combine,
 when time began, He rounded out the earth
 and molded it to form a mighty globe.
 Then poured He forth the deeps and gave command
 that they should billow in the rapid winds,
 that they should compass every shore of earth.
 He also added fountains, pools and lakes,
 and bound with shelving banks the slanting streams,
 ...man was created! Did the *Unknown God*
 designing then a better world make man
 of seed divine? Or did Prometheus
 take the new soil of earth (that still contained
 some godly element of Heaven's Life)
 and use it to create the race of man;
 first mingling it with water of new streams;
 so that his new creation, upright man,
 was made in image of commanding Gods?
 (*Metamorphoses* I. 35-45; 74-82, italics added)

It is upon the very idea of a Creator God that Paul builds his argument, with a positive identification of the unknown god as “the God who made the world and everything in it” (v. 24).

The Critique of Traditional Religion

Having identified which god he is proclaiming, Paul then, plunges into a hot topic that colors the tone of his speech, beginning in Acts 17:24 and continuing through verse 29.

The God who made the world and everything in it, this Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by human hands nor is he served by human hands as having any need, for he gives to all life and breath and all things. From one he made every nation of people to dwell on all the face of the earth, having designated fixed times and the boundaries of their dwelling places to search for God, so perhaps they might grope for him and find him, also being not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and exist, as also some of your poets said, “for we also are his offspring.” Since being offspring of God, we ought not to think the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by the skill and imagination of people. (Acts 17:24-29)

The topic of idolatry had elicited no small discussion among Greeks for hundreds of years in philosophical circles. What are the gods like and how are they to be worshiped? Are they really as Homer and Hesiod described? The Classical Period was thought of as an age of enlightenment, and, as such, great minds began exploring possible scientific explanations for the world while eschewing much of the mythology surrounding the gods. The gods exist, yes, but they are not as Homer and Hesiod depict them. These were the sentiments shared by many. Hence a variety of outlooks emerged. This topic was fodder for both Stoic and Epicurean schools. The discussion that follows will be divided into two main categories: 1) what the gods are not like and 2) what the gods are like.

Against Idolatry: What the Gods Are Not Like

Xenophanes, a pre-Socratic philosopher of the sixth century B.C., expressed serious misgivings

about the religious perception of his time. He denounced Homer and Hesiod's portrayal of the gods, "Both Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all things that are shameful and a reproach among mankind: theft, adultery, and mutual deception. They have narrated every possible wicked story of the gods" (Xenophanes, *Fragments* 11,12). Notice his sarcasm regarding the practice of idolatry:

But mortals believe the gods to be created by birth, and to have their own (mortals') raiment, voice and body. But if oxen (and horses) and lions had hands or could draw with hands and create works of art like those made by men, horses would draw pictures of gods like horses, and oxen of gods like oxen, and they would make the bodies (of their gods) in accordance with the form that each species itself possesses. Ethiopians have gods with snub noses and black hair, Thracians have gods with grey eyes and red hair. (Xenophanes, *Fragments* 14-16)

Xenophanes rightly attests that people have made gods in their own image. Herein lies the ridiculous. Far from being an atheist, Xenophanes does advocate praise and respect for the gods (Xenophanes, *Elegiacs* 1). But he certainly is not hesitant to draw traditional ideas into question, a pattern that continued to emerge in the next centuries.

Plato, in his *Republic* (c. 380 B.C.), dialogues at some length regarding the inappropriateness of many of the stories of Homer and Hesiod for children's ears. He advocated censorship, not perhaps because of the type of content that would today earn an 'R' rating in Hollywood, but because he considered that the stories themselves were false. Consider the following dialogue:

"Then shall we so easily let the children hear just any tales fashioned by just anyone and take into their souls opinions for the most part opposite to those we'll suppose they must have when they are grown up?" "In no event will we permit it." "First, as it seems, we must supervise the makers of tales; and if they make a fine tale, it must be approved, but if it's not, it must be rejected...Most of those they now tell must be thrown out." "Which sort?" he said. "...The ones Hesiod and Homer told us, and the other poets too. They surely composed false tales for human beings and used to tell them and still do tell them." (377c, d)

The passage continues on to list examples of the "lies" that the poets Homer and Hesiod recorded. The ideas that gods were at war with one another and that they plotted deceitful schemes were repudiated. Children cannot discern fact from fiction and therefore should not even be told such stories. The poets, in Plato's estimation, had painted a picture of the gods not bearing the slightest resemblance to reality. They should be regarded with the highest level of skepticism, at the least, and discarded entirely, at best, particularly in the case of a young audience.

What, then, about the matter of sacrifices to the gods? Both Plato and Xenophon recorded dialogues of Socrates. Although convicted and found "guilty of corrupting the minds of the young, and of believing in supernatural things of his own invention instead of the gods recognized by the State" (Plato, *Apology* 24c), it seems that Socrates did affirm the giving of sacrifices to the gods of the State:

First, then, for his attitude towards religion; his deeds and words were clearly in harmony with the answer given by the Priestess at Delphi to such questions as "What is my duty about sacrifice?" or about "cult of ancestors." For the answer of the Priestess is, "Follow the custom of the State: that is the way to act piously." And so Socrates acted himself and counseled others to act. To take any other course he considered presumption and folly. (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* I.3.I)

Despite this affirmation, he seemed to believe that the gods did not need the sacrifices of mortals. Was his advocacy of sacrifice fueled more by pressure from the State than by his own theology? Possibly. For he makes it known that the gods do not benefit from offerings:

Socrates:...Show me what benefit for the gods eventuates from the donations which they receive from us. It's clear to anybody what they contribute, because nothing is good for us except what comes from them; but how are they benefited by what they receive from us? Or do we come off so much better than them in this trade, that we get all good things from them, while they get none from us?

Coda: Euthyphro affirms that the gods receive no benefit from our service, only gratification. Socrates recognizes that explaining holiness in terms of the gratification of the gods is similar to explaining it in terms of their approval.

Euthyphro: Do you really suppose, Socrates, that the gods are benefited as a result of what they get from us?

Socrates: Well, whatever could these gifts of ours to the gods be, Euthyphro? (Plato, *Euthyphro* 15a)

And so Socrates, answering a question with another question, makes plain that the gods do not have need of the gifts that people offer. Paul's statement in Acts 17:25 intersects with this line of thought, "nor is he served by human hands as having any need, for he gives to all life and breath and all things." Moving on to the third and fourth century B.C., we can see that the critique of traditional religion is not a trend about to be abandoned. Epicurus, in his *Letter to Menoeceus*, affirms his belief in the gods but also deems public opinion about the gods to be in grave error:

That which I have continuously passed on to you, do and practice these things, taking these as elementary principles of the virtuous life. First, believe that God is a living being, eternal and blessed, as the common idea of God is subscribed. You must not ascribe to him that which is not fitting with immortality or blessedness. But keep watch that you believe in his immortality and blessedness. For they are gods. And the knowledge of them is manifest: they are not as many believe, for they do not keep watch over them as they think. It is not the one who denies the gods of the many, but the one who believes in the gods of the many who is ungodly (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* X. 123, my trans.).

While questioning the beliefs of the many regarding the gods, Epicurus, like Socrates, affirmed the practice of idolatry, "The wise man will set up votive images" (D.L. *Lives* X. 120). He encouraged his followers to participate in idol sacrifices without worrying about the false beliefs of the public at large. He himself is reputed to have been an initiate to the Eleusian mysteries (Philodemus, *De Piety* 2, col. 108-9).⁵ Epicurus was harshly criticized for inconsistency between belief and practice. It may well be that he engaged in such practices with self-preservation in mind, in order to circumvent persecution for supposed impiety.⁶

Zeno, founder of the Stoic school, issued sentiments to the effect that temples and cult statues were "unworthy of the real god" and should be abolished.⁷ This could have been an important thought in the back of the minds of the Stoics in Paul's audience in the Areopagus. If so, then his denunciation of idolatry beginning in verse 24 would not have been shocking. Several hundred years later, in the 1st century B.C., Cicero presented both the Stoic and Epicurean viewpoints through a dialogue in his work *De Natura Deorum*. Cicero's description of the Epicurean ideal of worship without superstition could agree with Zeno's thought:

⁵ As cited in Rist, *Epicurus, An Introduction*, 157.

⁶ Rist, *Epicurus, An Introduction*, 156, 157.

⁷ Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 177.

We have said enough to prove that we should worship the gods with piety, and without superstition, if that were the only question...For the superior and excellent nature of the gods requires a pious adoration from men, because it is possessed of immortality and the most exalted felicity; for whatever excels has a right to veneration; and all fear of the power and anger of the gods should be banished; for we must understand that anger and affection are inconsistent with the nature of a happy and immortal being. These apprehensions being removed, no dread of the superior powers remains. (*De Natura Deorum* I.45)

Who believes that the Hippocentaur or the Chimaera ever existed? Where can you find an old wife senseless enough to be afraid of the monsters of the lower world that were once believed in? The years obliterate the inventions of the imagination, but confirm the judgments of nature. (*De Natura Deorum* II.5)

In these passages, Cicero engaged with the Epicurean viewpoint in his argumentation. Towards the end of book I of *De Natura Deorum*, he declares that “freedom from superstition” is the “favorite boast” of the Epicurean school (I. 117). Keeping these things in mind, one wonders how provocative Paul’s words, “I perceive that you are very superstitious (δαισιδαίμονες τέρους) in everything” (v. 22), might have been to his audience as a whole. While the philosophers may well have agreed with this piece of commentary on the spiritual climate of Athens, how would the general populace have responded? Such an introductory statement may have highlighted a controversial cultural issue. If the gods are not as poets say they are, why are they worshiped in such a way? Although the philosophical schools may have denounced superstition with regard to the worship of the gods, Socrates was inconsistent in praxis, as was Epicurus. And what about Paul’s audience? Was Paul calling them on the carpet? For all of the philosophy that came out of Athens, there was also a remarkable quantity of superstitious practice.

Contemporary to Cicero in the first century B.C., Lucretius was also against the traditional view of the gods. Generally following Epicurean philosophy, Lucretius sought to use scientific reason as a means of debunking mythology. In his work, *De Rerum Natura*, he writes about the natural explanation for the phenomena of thunder and then asks an intense series of rhetorical questions in rapid-fire sequence that critique, by means of practical logic, the belief that lightning is sent by the gods. The tone is somewhat comedic:

Why again do they aim at deserts and waste their labour? Or are they then practicing their arms and strengthening their muscles? And why do they suffer the Father’s bolt to be blunted against the earth? Why does he himself allow this, instead of saving it for his enemies? Why again does Jupiter never cast a bolt on the earth and sound his thunder, when the heaven is clear on all sides? Does he wait until clouds have come up, to descend into them himself, that he may be near by to direct from them the blow of his bolt? With what purpose again does he strike the sea? What has he against the waves, the mass of water, the swimming plains?

...Lastly, why does he shatter holy shrines of the gods, and even his own illustrious habitations, with the fatal thunderbolt, why smash fine-wrought images of the gods and rob his own statues of their grandeur with a violent wound? And why does he generally attack high places, why do we see most traces of his fire on the mountain-tops? (6:396-407; 417-22)

This series of literary thunderbolts undermines the foundations of the age-old view that Jupiter sends lightning to the earth. So, with respect to traditional views of religion, at least, the Stoic and Epicurean schools seemed to have a point of relative agreement. There are gods, yes, but their nature certainly is not as the epic poets have portrayed them.

The words of Seneca may also be worthy of particular note, as he was contemporary to Paul. The tutor of Nero, he was a student and teacher of Stoic philosophy. Whereas Socrates advocated making sacrifices, Seneca sought to redefine what true worship should look like. Writing a few years after Paul's Areopagus speech, he states, "We do not honor the gods by bloody offerings, but by our right and virtuous intention" (*De Beneficiis* I.6.3). While his predecessors were guilty of hypocrisy, Seneca makes bold prohibitions:

Let us forbid men to offer morning salutation and to throng the doors of temples; mortal ambitions are attracted by such ceremonies, but God is worshipped by those who truly know Him. Let us forbid bringing towels and flesh scrapers to Jupiter, and proffering mirrors to Juno; for God seeks no servants. Of course not; he himself does service to mankind, everywhere and to all he is at hand to help. (*Epistles* XCV: 47)

These statements represented a shift in thought from those who preceded him who practiced the giving of offerings while also teaching that the gods received no benefit from sacrifices. Seneca seems considerably more consistent in thought and practice than others do.

The poet Ovid, in his previously mentioned work, *Metamorphoses*, used the power of story to highlight the celestial crimes of the gods. Athena challenged the mortal Arachne to a weaving contest to determine who had the greater ability. While the subject of Athena's weaving was the superiority of the gods, Arachne's work showcased a multitude of criminal acts perpetrated by the gods. Case after case of a divine atrocity is woven into her piece. Zeus assumes the form of a bull and "tricks" Europa. He then morphs into an eagle in his attack on Asterie, into a swan in his attack on Leda, and into a satyr in his attack on Antiope. A careful reading of the passage shows that there were "no less than twenty one divine rapes" in Arachne's woven work.⁸ Infuriated by Arachne's superior handiwork and the uncomfortable truth it exposed, Athena transforms her into a spider (*Metamorphoses* 103-45). This shows not only the author's sentiments regarding his view of Zeus but also of Athena. The goddess of wisdom here displays her folly in being angry at the depiction of Zeus as he really was. Ovid thus pulls back the curtain to reveal Zeus as a dangerous criminal rather than a hero.

So, then, was traditional religion a sham? Some of the literary giants wrote pointed critiques of popular thought about the gods. This was not a passing fancy or trendy thought. This theme was woven into the fabric of the dramatists, the philosophers, and the popular writers for hundreds of years preceding the arrival of the Gospel. Paul may well have been speaking to a disaffected audience. His words of critique may well have resonated with his hearers. He was not the first to speak against superstition. Truly, this was a hallmark of Epicurean thought. Nor was he the first to speak against idolatrous worship. Perhaps derived from Euripides or elaborating on a Socratic idea, the concept that God "does not live in shrines made by human hands nor is he served by human hands as having any need" (Acts 17:24-25), had already reached public awareness. Paul, in such a way, could have found common ground with some in his audience, or at least discovered a point of keen interest and possible debate.

What God Is Like

The debunking of traditional ideas left a vacuum in which the philosophers attempted to reason. If we know what God is NOT like, what then IS he like? This question leads us into a range of topics related to the perceived character of God by Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. Content related to the view of God as Creator, present with his creation, and judge will be explored in this section. The Stoic and Epicurean views will be described and then contrasted with the theology of Paul's speech.

8 Catherine Kroeger, *The Nachleben of Euripides' Antiope: The Heroine's Transformation into a Mystagogue and an Element in the Justification of Zeus* (PhD Dissertation. University of Minnesota, 1987), 133.

Stoic Views of God: Pantheism vs. Omnipresence

Zeno (334-262 BC) taught that there was a divine Creator of the world. This God is the father of all, who providentially cares for all creation and has nothing evil in his nature. His belief was that the names of the many gods were reflective of the attributes of the creating deity:

The deity, say they, is a living being, immortal, rational, perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting nothing evil [into him], taking providential care of the world and all that therein is, but he is not of human shape. He is, however, an artificer of the universe and, as it were, the father of all, both in general and in that particular part of him which is all-pervading, and which is called many names according to its various powers. They give the name Dia (Δία) because all things are due to him (διὰ); Zeus (Ζῆνα) in so far as he is the cause of life (ζῶν) or pervades all life; the name Athena is given, because the ruling part of the divinity extends to the aether; the name Hera marks its extension to the air; he is called Hephaestus since it spreads to the creative fire; Poseidon, since it stretches to the sea; Demeter, since it reaches to the earth. Similarly men have given the deity his other titles, fastening, as best they can, on some one or other of his peculiar attributes. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VII. 147)

In this way, the doctrine of Zeno described the many gods as manifestations of different aspects of the Creator. Further, it can be seen in Diogenes Laertius' writings that Zeno, as founder of the Stoic school, believed in pantheism, as did Chrysippus, "The substance of God is declared by Zeno to be the whole world and the heaven, as well as by Chrysippus in his first book, *Of the Gods* " (*Lives* VII. 148). God himself, at times, was thought to indwell the substance of his creation, "...being the artificer of this orderly arrangement, who at stated periods of time absorbs into himself the whole of substance and again creates it from himself" (*Lives* VII. 138).

Where is God? The first thing Paul does after identifying the unknown God as the subject of his speech is to state where he does not live, "in temples made by human hands" (Acts 17:24b). Ancient Athens had many temples. The question of where God dwells was posed by Cicero in the first century B.C. He questioned idolatry, "However, granting your view that god is the image and the likeness of man, what is his dwelling place and local habitation... About your deity therefore I want to know, first, where he dwells" (*De Natura Deorum* I. 103,4). This question is answered in Paul's speech, "not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27b). Aratus (c. 315-240 B.C.) wrote of the presence of Zeus everywhere:

From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the havens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus. For we are also his offspring; and he in his kindness unto men giveth favorable signs and wakeneth the people to work, reminding them of livelihood. (*Phaenomena*, 1-7)

This passage is notable for the thoughts it affords regarding the nearness of a kind God. Yet over and against a pantheistic view, the true God is omnipresent.

God's Offspring

The *Phaenomena* is also notable for the phrase, "For we are also his offspring," which appears to be what Paul is quoting in v. 28b. A very similar phrase is also found in Cleanthes' Hymn, "For we are your offspring" (*The Hymn of Cleanthes*, line 4, my trans.). This also sounds like Acts 17:28b. Is Paul quoting Aratus or Cleanthes? Although similar, the Greek of Aratus matches that of Acts 17:28 more closely. While this may be the case, it should also be noted that Paul said he was quoting "some" of their own poets, not "one" of their poets. In this regard, it seems that could have been referring to both Aratus and Cleanthes at the same time in a more general sense.

Yet the concept of being offspring of a god was in circulation even before their time. Consider the following from Plato:

Therefore the goddess, being a lover of war and a lover of wisdom, chose the place that was likely to bear men to herself. She established this first. Therefore you lived under laws of such a kind, and laws yet better and exceeding all men in every excellence, becoming just as those who are the offspring and pupils of gods.” (*Timaeus* 24d, my trans.)

Perhaps of more importance than the precise origin of the quotation is the way in which Paul employed it in his argument against idolatry. Building on the quoted words, “For we also are his offspring” (Acts 17:28), Paul quickly extended the idea to its logical end. Can an idol of gold, silver, or stone generate offspring? Of course not, the idea in itself is absurd. In this way, Paul quickly wedged a stick of dynamite into the thought system undergirding idolatry.

Divine Interaction with the Creation

Both Cicero and Seneca depicted Stoicism as affirming not only the existence of the gods, but also their involvement with creation. In Cicero’s work, *De Natura Deorum*, Stoic teachings are explained:

Our sect divides the whole question concerning the immortal Gods into four parts. First, they prove that there are gods; secondly, of what character and nature they are; thirdly, that the universe is governed by them; and lastly, that they exercise a superintendence over human affairs...This is Jupiter, the governor of the world, who rules all things with his nod, and is, as the same Ennius adds...of Gods and men the sire, an omnipresent and omnipotent God. (II.3, 4)

Paul covers some elements of this four-part question regarding the nature of God in his speech. The character of God is shown. God “made the world and everything in it” (v. 24a), “does not dwell in temples” (v. 24b), and is “not far from each one of us” (v. 27). Along the lines of the third part of the Stoic question, “that the universe is governed by them,” Paul stated, “he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he intends to judge the world in righteousness” (v. 30, 31). Finally, aspects of the fourth part of the Stoic question regarding the “superintendence over human affairs” can be seen: “From one he made every nation of people to dwell on all the face of the earth, having designated fixed times and the boundaries of their dwelling places to search for God” (vv. 26-27). It seems that Paul may have been well aware of Stoic concerns. God is indeed involved in the affairs of humankind and will bring all to account. The Christian God is both omnipotent and omnipresent.

Continuing on the topic of the kindness and providence of God, Seneca echoes the sentiments of previous Stoic teachers. God is thought of as both kind and in control of the universe:

Although a man hear what limit he should observe in sacrifice, and how far he should recoil from burdensome superstitions, he will never make sufficient progress until he has conceived a right idea of God, regarding Him as one who possesses all things, and allots all things, and bestows them without price. And what reason have the gods for doing deeds of kindness? It is their nature...The first way to worship the gods is to believe in the gods; the next to acknowledge their majesty, to acknowledge their goodness without which there is no majesty. Also, to know that they are supreme commanders in the universe, controlling all things by their power and acting as guardians of the human race, even though they are sometimes unmindful of the individual. They neither give nor have evil; but they do chasten and restrain certain persons, and impose penalties, and sometimes punish by bestowing that which seems

good outwardly. Would you win over the gods? Then be a good man. Whoever imitates them, is worshipping them sufficiently. (Seneca, *Epistles* XCV: 47-50)

Thus, the Stoic view of the nature of the gods affirmed a creative force behind the world. The gods were thought of as present with the human race and interacting to bring both retribution and kindness to people. Paul seems very mindful of the questions and topics the Stoics in his audience might have been discussing. His presentation affirmed the omnipotence and omnipresence of God, as well as the superintendence of a provident God over creation. All of these aspects were things that Stoics, as a whole, would have affirmed.

Epicureans

While the Stoics and Epicureans both believed in the existence of the gods and that they were misrepresented in traditional religion, the general agreement between the two schools pretty much ended after that point. Whereas the Stoics believed in gods who watched over them, the Epicureans did not. According to Diogenes Laertius, Epicurus taught, “They are not as the many believe, for they do not keep watch over them as they think” (*Lives* X. 123). The gods of the Epicureans were distant from humanity. Epicurus himself penned as the very first of his *Maxims*: “A blessed and eternal being has no trouble himself and brings no trouble upon any other being; hence he is exempt from movements of anger and partiality, for every such movement implies weakness” (*Lives* X. 139). Whereas the Stoics believed in gods who created the world, the Epicureans did not. Lucretius, faced with the age-old question, “If God is good, how can we account for evil in the world,” reasoned that the world, since it contains evil, could not have been created by a good and kind god:

But even granting that I did not know what are the first-beginnings of things, thus much at least I would dare to affirm from the very ways of heaven, and to show from many other facts, that the world certainly was not made for us by divine power: so great are the faults with which it stands endowed. (*De Rerum Natura* 5:195-99)

Perhaps it was for this reason that the Epicureans sought a natural explanation for the universe, rooted in science rather than theology.

All things considered, the Epicureans among the group at the Areopagus would not have had many fundamental points of agreement with Paul regarding the nature of God. While Stoics might have had several points of wholehearted agreement through most of Paul’s speech, Epicureans might have had multiple points of contention. The Stoics might have tracked fairly closely with Paul in his presentation of God as a providential Creator. The concept of the omnipresence of God, while fundamentally different than pantheism, could have been a feasible step for their understanding. Epicureans, however, looking at the broken state of affairs on earth, would not have been able to understand how a good God could have created it. It is also likely that they might have disagreed with Paul on the idea of the nearness of a God who will ultimately bring judgment. So, while Paul had several areas of common ground with some in his audience, others were hearing information with which they might not have agreed.

Greek View of the Soul/Resurrection

While Paul begins his speech by engaging in a topic of popular concern, the nature of the divine, he is by no means limited to the building blocks of familiar culture in the presentation of the gospel. He abruptly extends the boundaries of the imagination of his entire audience into unexplored territory with the mention of resurrection:

“Indeed God having overlooked times of ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he fixed a day in which he intends to judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he appointed, showing assurance to all by raising him

from the dead.” But when they heard of the resurrection of the dead some scoffed, but others said, “We will hear from you concerning this also again.” (Acts 17:30-32)

This mention of the resurrection may well have stepped beyond their boundaries of credibility because of the Greek view of the soul.

On this topic, there was again sharp disagreement between Epicureans and Stoics. Epicurus taught that there was a soul, and upon death all the soul atoms would fly apart, dissipating completely. In his *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus wrote of the soul:

We must recognize generally that the soul is a corporeal thing, composed of fine particles, dispersed all over the frame, ...Moreover, when the whole frame is broken up, the soul is scattered and has no longer the same powers as before, or the same motions; hence it does not possess sentience either. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* X. 63-65)

His view, then, is that the soul is not immortal. Since the soul is not immortal, death is the final end:

Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply sentience, and death is the privation of all sentience; therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life an illimitable time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality...It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer. (*Lives* X. 125)

With such a view, Epicureans would have had fodder for rich debate with those who believed in immortality.

Plato, on the other hand, taught the immortality of the soul. As seen in the dialogues and teachings of Socrates, the immortality of the soul is a key doctrine of Plato's thought. Two of his works, *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (book 10), contain material reflecting Socrates' belief on this topic. Socrates stated plainly in the recorded dialogue, “‘And the soul does not accept death?’ ‘No.’ ‘So then, the soul is immortal.’ ‘Immortal.’ ‘Very well,’ he said. ‘Should we say that this has been proved? What do you think?’ ‘Yes, and quite sufficiently, O Socrates’” (*Phaedo* 105e; my trans.). Previously in the same work, a similar statement had been made, “And so by this reasoning also it seems that the soul is immortal” (*Phaedo* 73a; my trans.). The *Republic* carries a similar line, “But if we are listening to me, then we esteem that the soul is immortal and capable of maintaining all things, good and evil” (X 621c; my trans.). The soul was thought to have pre-existed the present life, “Then our souls had a previous existence, Simmias, before they took on this human shape – they were independent of our bodies and had intelligence” (*Phaedo* 76c).⁹

Evidence of dualistic thought in Plato's writing can be found in the following passage:

Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over his soul is a helpless prisoner, chained hand and foot in the body, compelled to view reality not directly but only through its prison bars, and wallowing in utter ignorance...Well, philosophy takes over the soul in this condition and by gentle persuasion tries to set it free. (*Phaedo* 82d-83a)

Not only is the body the prison of the soul, it can only be set free from this punishment through conversion to philosophy. This being the case, the ultimate freedom of the soul is realized only upon death:

Then it departs to the place where things are like itself – invisible, divine, immortal and wise, where, on its arrival, happiness awaits it, and release from uncertainty and folly, from fears and gnawing desires, and all other human evils; and where (as they

⁹ See also Plato, *Republic*. X. 608d – 621d.

say of the initiates in the Mysteries) it really spends the rest of time with divine beings.
(*Phaedo* 81a)

Such is the destiny for those who have lived good lives. For others, however, more imprisonment awaits:

Of course these are not the souls of the good, but of inferior people, and they are compelled to wander about these places as a punishment for their bad conduct in the past. They continue wandering until at last, through craving for the corporeal, which unceasingly pursues them, they are imprisoned once more in a body... well, those who have cultivated gluttony or assault or drunkenness, instead of taking pains to avoid them, are likely to assume the form of donkeys and other perverse animals; don't you think so? (*Phaedo* 81d,e)

The teaching of transmigration has at its core the fundamental idea that the housing of a soul in the body is punishment for misconduct in a previous life.

Following a line of Platonic reasoning, some in Paul's audience might have balked at the idea of a bodily resurrection. Once free of the body, why go back to the same prison? The idea of resurrection would have been completely foreign to them. Indeed, even before the days of Socrates, resurrection was thought of as impossible:

But when the dust hath drained the blood of man, once he is slain, there is no return (*ἀνάστασις*) to life. For this my Father hath provided no remedial spells, though all things else he reverseth and disposeth at his will; nor doth his exercise of might cost him a breath. (Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, lines 647-52)

Also in the 5th century B.C., the famous Euripides includes the following lines in his play, *Heracles*:

Lycus: Not here is he; nor shall he ever come.

Amphitryon: Never, - except by a God raised from the dead. (line 718)

A fourth class conditional is employed in the Greek text, showing the highest degree of improbability that a dead person could be raised by a god.¹⁰

Hence, those Athenians who loved to spend their time doing nothing but discussing new ideas had their new idea. The message that Paul was giving was absolutely unique with regards to resurrection. The crowd is then divided, as it was many times in the Gospels when Jesus preached. The passage ends on the hopeful note that some became believers. Was Paul's message an effective apologetic? Yes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it could be said that Paul carefully crafted his Areopagus speech in order to engage his audience on topics that were already being discussed in the culture of the day. The themes of his speech resonated loudly with themes in Greek literature covering a span of six centuries. These themes were found not only in writings of the great philosophers Plato, Zeno, and Epicurus, to name but a few, but also in the great tragic dramas of Euripides and Aeschylus as well as in the works of the poet Ovid. Although new to Athens, Paul demonstrated great skill in communicating the good news of the gospel using terms and concepts that would have been familiar to his hearers.

Although Paul engaged with the culture of the time, finding perhaps the agreement of both Stoics and Epicureans in his rejection of idolatry, there are certain points in the speech where he divided them as well as moved the entire audience out of its comfort zone. While Stoics may have

¹⁰ The line reads οὐκ εἰ μὴ τις θεὸν ἀναστήσειε. The use of εἰ + the optative verb shows the highest degree of improbability. Cf. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 1020.

likely been still agreeing with him during the section on the nature of God, those who closely followed Epicurus would have been disagreeing very early in the message, since they believed that God neither created the world nor takes much notice of the doings of humans on the earth. The conclusion of Paul's speech, with mention of the resurrection, would have been a new idea for all. So, while Paul artfully designed his message in a way that engaged current ideas as well as those that had been discussed for many years, he was by no means reticent to move his audience into the new light of truth. He proclaimed the resurrection boldly. This shows that Paul was interacting with culture only as a means and not as an end. Those who had been groping in the dark of Greek philosophy in their search for God finally had the light turned on for them. Some of them responded in faith. Paul, as a master evangelist, used familiar ideas to build a bridge to the unfamiliar.

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Reconnecting the Church: Finding Our Place in Complex Culture

Most churches are ministering in constantly changing communities. Many cultures, languages, religions, races, ideologies, lifestyles, and increased inroads of secularization in our society, have become a permanent part of our ministry context. This book has termed this diversity “complex culture.” Each local community has its own unique composition of this complexity, and it has resulted in a certain degree of disconnection.

On the one hand, people in “complex culture” often feel as though they have no common ground with the Church. On the other hand, it can be intimidating for the Church to attempt interaction with people with whom it has less and less in common.

“Reconnecting the Church” is intended to come alongside the local church to help the reader to

look and listen in ways that uncover needs, and formulate means their local church can use to engage, and to serve its local community. The action/reflection projects at the end of each chapter describe actionable projects, and give guidance for reflection on the results.

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Left to right: D.Min. students
Deanna Bridges and Rev. Laura Nelson

**“IT’S A HUGE HELP TO
SHARE LIKE JOURNEYS,
DIFFICULTIES, JOYS
AND STRUGGLES.”**

Right: Dr. David Currie
(Director of the
D.Min. Program) with
D.Min. student Tim
Philabaum



Laura Nelson and Deanna Bridges are two very different people discovering that learning together can be a great asset.

Both are pursuing a D.Min. in Pastoral Skills: Pastor as Preacher, Caregiver and Person. Deanna leads a ministry to Boston's inner city teens. She needed deeper training and the credentials to work with local officials to secure services for the young people. "I have gained a wealth of knowledge just listening to fellow students talk about their trials and accomplishments," she says. "Now I know what to watch out for, and what I want for my position as pastor to the youth."

Laura, a senior pastor from British Columbia, wanted to improve her pastoral skills. She benefited immediately from the insights of classmates when a suicidal parishioner sought help. "Because we had talked about this as a class I knew some of the steps to take," she observes. "...As pastors, we're part of a unique world. It's a huge help to share like journeys, difficulties, joys and struggles. Even if you're from a different nationality, there's a commonality."

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“The Culture Wars Over ‘Family Values’”: Are Evangelicals Fighting the Wrong Battles in the Wrong Way and Losing Badly?

STEVEN R. TRACY

For the past three decades conservative evangelicals have been heavily involved in social and political debate regarding issues deemed critically relevant to the welfare of the traditional nuclear family, particularly abortion, homosexuality, religious freedom, and limited government. Many of us have been largely misguided in the “family values” culture war with respect to the choice of issues and the manner in which the “war” has been conducted. I specifically contend that a loving focus on justice and mercy for the oppressed and broken is the most effective and biblical approach to “family values.”

America, along with much of the western world, has experienced tremendous social change in the past several decades. This is particularly true with respect to marriage, family, and sexual behavior.¹ For instance, in the United States cohabitation before marriage rose from only 10% of couples cohabiting between 1965 and 1974 to over 50% of those marrying between 1990 and 1994.² Cohabitation rates for those remarrying are even higher. Not only has the institution of marriage weakened, but the very essence and definition of marriage itself is hotly contested. For evangelical Christians, these changes are most disturbing since marriage is understood to have been instituted at the dawn of human creation and ordained by God as the cornerstone of human society. The societal importance of the so-called “traditional family,” i.e., a family unit composed of a monogamous, legally married man and woman and their children, has been increasingly validated in numerous research studies. For adults, traditional marriage is strongly correlated with better physical health, improved longevity, greater sexual satisfaction, lower rates of depression, significantly decreased rates of domestic violence, and greatly lower rates of poverty.³ Additionally, marriage has great demonstrable benefits for children.⁴ For instance, children of single parents are much more likely to drop out of high school, to get arrested, and to abuse drugs and alcohol.⁵

The challenge of “family values” discussions partially lies in the intensely personal nature of the topic. Family “is the site of our deepest longings and most terrifying fears.”⁶ Furthermore, “family values” discussions have become strained due to the history of its usage in the past two or three decades. In many contexts “family values” has a political meaning associated with a package of specific conservative social values and public policies. In response to this usage of “family values” political and religious liberals have more recently begun to argue that political/religious conservatives do not have exclusive rights to “family values.”⁷ Groups as antithetical to social

1 Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (rev. ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Maggie Gallagher, *The Abolition of Marriage: How We Destroy Lasting Love* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1996); William J. Goodie, *World Changes in Divorce Patterns* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

2 Pamela J. Smock, “Cohabitation in the United States: An Appraisal of Research Themes, Findings, and Implications,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 3.

3 William Doherty et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-Six Conclusion from the Social Sciences* (2nd ed.; New York: Institute for American Values, 2005); Jan E. Stets, “Cohabiting and Marital Aggression: The Role of Social Isolation,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1991): 669-80; Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000).

4 David Popenoe, *Cohabitation, Marriage, and Child Wellbeing: A Cross-National Perspective* (Piscataway, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2008); Online: <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/NMP2008CohabitationReport.pdf>.

5 Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture: Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and Family* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998); Benjamin Scafidi, *The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First Ever Estimates for the Nation and All Fifty States* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2008); Judith Wallerstein, Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: The 25 Year Landmark Study* (New York: Hyperion, 2000).

6 Jean Bethke Elshtain, “The Heart of the Matter: The Family as the Site of Fundamental Ethical Struggle,” in *Family Transformed: Religion, Values, and Society in American Life*, eds. Steven M. Tipton and John Witte Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 211-24.

7 Don S. Browning, “Is the Family a Conservative Issue?” in *Equality and the Family: A Fundamental, Practical*

conservative family values as Planned Parenthood and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays now promote their mission and agendas around “family values.”⁸

I. The Issues

1. Definitions, History, and Participants

For purposes of this study, I define proponents of family values (PFVs) as “political and religious conservatives, most often evangelicals, who view the traditional family as the pillar of human society, and who believe the traditional family must be protected through every means possible, particularly through political activism.”⁹ I will focus primarily on evangelical PFVs, but not exclusively since they are often tightly linked with conservative Catholics and Jews who share their values and goals.¹⁰

My definition of “family values” is not arbitrary but is a generally recognized descriptive definition which comes directly from the last three decades of American “culture wars” which have largely revolved around competing visions of the family and human sexuality.¹¹ The current Religious Right “family values” movement grew out of the actions of evangelical leaders in the 1970s.¹² It is widely believed that the primary impetus for this movement was the landmark Roe vs. Wade 1973 Supreme Court abortion decision. Actually, however, the precipitating spark appears to have been fear over Christian schools losing their tax exempt status due to Christian school policies which promoted racial segregation.¹³ (Bob Jones University had historically denied admission to African American students. When African Americans were admitted in the 1970s, BJU prohibited interracial dating, prompting the IRS in 1975 to attempt to revoke their tax-exempt status.) The “family values movement” was fully launched in 1979 when evangelical leaders such as Jerry

Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers in Modern Societies, ed. Don S. Browning (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 61-74.

8 For instance, a search of “family values” on the Planned Parenthood home page (<http://www.plannedparenthood.org>) garners 121 hits, most of which are articles which strategically relate “family values” to the multiple activities and mission of Planned Parenthood. The Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays home page (<http://community.pflag.org>) has fifteen documents which specifically discuss “family values” and seek to show that their mission is truly about “family values.”

9 My definition and subsequent description of “proponents of family values” is similar to religious historian Randall Balmer’s definition of the religious right. He defines the latter as “a movement of politically conservative evangelicals who, since the late 1970s, have sought to exert their influence in political, cultural, and legal matters,” in *Thy Kingdom Come: An Evangelical’s Lament* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), xxvii.

10 For instance, influential conservative Catholic Phyllis Schlafly, who founded the Eagle Forum in 1972, has been a very influential “family values” leader. Other conservative Catholic family values proponents include William Benett, Richard John Neuhaus, and Robert H. Bork. Some of the influential conservative Jewish PFVs include Michael Medved and Laura Schlessinger. For a detailed treatment of the political alliance of conservative Catholics and evangelicals, see Deal W. Hudson, *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Growing Political Power of Catholics and Evangelicals in the United States* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2008).

11 For an excellent analysis of the recent “culture wars,” see James D. Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Control The Family, Art, Education, Law, And Politics In America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). Hunter argues that American culture in the latter part of the 20th century experienced a deep realignment of values which led to the conflict and tensions evidenced in the “culture wars.” Contra Alan Wolfe, *One Nation, after All: What Middle-Class Americans Really Think about: God, Country, Family, Racism, Welfare, Immigration, Homosexuality, Work, the Right, the Left, and Each Other* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

12 For an informed discussion of the development and nature of the religious right, see Michael Cromartie, ed., *No Longer Exiles: The Religious New Right in American Politics*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992); William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996). On the recent development of the political right, see John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (New York, Penguin: 2004). On the complex nature of evangelicalism, including a more conservative element, see George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

13 Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 11-17; Cromartie, *No Longer Exiles*, 26; Ralph Reed, *Active Faith: How Christians are Changing the Soul of American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) 105; contra The Moral Majority Coalition, “Moral Majority Timeline,” n.p. [cited 11 November 2008]. Online: http://www.moralmajority.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=29.

Falwell, Tim and Beverly LaHaye, Charles Stanley, and D. James Kennedy formed The Moral Majority. The Moral Majority became arguably the most influential “family values” organization. It was dedicated to the bold use of the political system to combat what they perceived as liberal and secular attacks on historic Judeo-Christian morality and to promote “traditional family values.”¹⁴ A decade later the Christian Coalition emerged with an even more purely political agenda for winning the “family values” culture war.¹⁵ The Christian Coalition was particularly influential with the Republican Party in the 1990s and helped advance conservative “pro family” politicians and public policies.¹⁶ These influences continue to the present.¹⁷

Other influential PFVs, all of whom explicitly state a pro family/family values mission, include: James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, one of the largest and arguably the most influential PFVs ministry in the United States,¹⁸ The Family Research Council, a non-profit public policy organization originally begun by Focus on the Family,¹⁹ Concerned Women of America, founded in 1979 by Beverly LaHaye,²⁰ The American Family Association, founded in 1977 by Don Wildman,²¹ The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, and The Alliance Defense Fund, a “legal defense and advocacy” of traditional family values and religious freedom.²² In addition to these PFVs who lead expressly Christian ministries, a number of the most popular and successful talk show hosts and journalists, such as Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, Ann Coulter, and Bill O’Reilly, champion conservative social and political agendas and implicitly or explicitly use “family values” language. Hence many of these individuals are often embraced by evangelical PFVs.²³

David Gushee cogently argues that the Religious Right PFVs are losing their dominance and that a more moderate “evangelical center” is emerging in the evangelical church.²⁴ He argues that

14 According to Jerry Falwell, the Moral Majority launched “with a pro-life, pro-traditional family, pro-national defense and pro-Israel platform,” Moral Majority, “Moral Majority Timeline.” Falwell disbanded the Moral Majority in 1989, but created a new smaller organization, the Moral Majority Coalition, in 2004 to continue the work of the Moral Majority. The latter organization appears to have only a fraction of the influence the Moral Majority had in the 1980s and early ’90s.

15 See Christian Coalition, “About Us,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.cc.org/about.cfm>.

16 For a first hand explanation of the rise and influence of the Christian Coalition by its then Executive Director, see Reed, *Active Faith*.

17 For instance, the Republican Party Platform lists “Protecting Our Families” as one of only four of its platform pillars, “2004 Republican Party Platform: A Safer World and a More Hopeful America,” 87-92.

18 James Dobson, who founded Focus on the Family in 1977, has been incredibly influential in evangelicalism as well as conservative Republican politics for the past three decades. Dobson has been an informal advisor to various politicians, including President Bush. According to their web site, “Focus on the Family-produced broadcasts have a combined reach of more than 220 million listeners daily in 155 countries. . . . The organization’s flagship radio show is the Focus on the Family daily broadcast . . . heard on more than 1,000 stations across the United States by millions of listeners weekly,” Focus on the Family, “Focus on the Family Fact Sheet,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www2.focusonthefamily.com/aboutus/a000001013.cfm>.

19 According to their web site, the “Family Research Council (FRC) was founded in 1983 as an organization dedicated to the promotion of marriage and family and the sanctity of human life in national policy.” Family Research Council, “About FRC,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.frc.org/about-frc>.

20 According to the Concerned Women of America web site, “Beverly LaHaye founded Concerned Women for America (CWA) in 1979 to protect and promote Biblical values for women and families.” “CWA Experts,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://gideon.cwfa.org/leadership.asp>.

21 The American Family Association claims to be “one of the largest and most effective pro-family organizations in the country with over two million online supporters and approximately 150,000 paid subscribers to the AFA Journal.” “What is AFA?” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://media.afa.net/newdesign/about.asp>. They also claim on their home page to be “America’s largest pro-family action site.”

22 www.alliancedefensefund.org.

23 Note, for instance, the recent cover article in *Citizen*, a magazine published by Focus on the Family, praised Rush Limbaugh for his “robust presentation of traditional values and conservative views on the airwaves.” They also put a picture of conservative talk show host Sean Hannity on the cover of the magazine and state, “Talk show hosts like Sean Hannity bring pro-family values to millions of Americans.” The article also positively noted Glenn Beck. Bale B. Buss, “Radio Revolution,” *Citizen*, (October 2007):18-23.

24 See, for example, Joel C. Hunter, *A New Kind of Conservative* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008).

this “evangelical center” affirms traditional “family values” such as traditional marriage and the sanctity of life but, unlike the Religious Right, is committed to a “broad holistic moral agenda,” and political independence, rejects the “angry nostalgia” and romanticized view of American history of the Religious Right, and is more sensitive to the reality of pluralism in American culture.²⁵ It does appear that we are in the midst of such a transition.²⁶ Yet, given the fact that conservative social/political “family values” have for three decades been pervasive and dominant in evangelicalism and in the Republican Party, and given the fact that some of the largest evangelical parachurch ministries and most popular authors and talk show hosts espouse and promulgate socially/politically conservative “family values,” this transition may only be in its early stages.

2. Enemies and Strategy

PFVs tend to view the world in rather binary terms: proponents of traditional values versus “liberals” who are undermining our values and threatening to destroy all we hold dear. As one PFV states, “When it comes to confronting evil, the fact is that there are essentially two types of people: those who are willing to fight it, and those who try to excuse it—or worse, deny it even exists.”²⁷ The precise enemies who threaten traditional values, including family values, are commonly identified by PFVs as: the ACLU, whose goal is a secular America and who is at war with traditional American values;²⁸ secular liberalism;²⁹ secular humanism;³⁰ big government;³¹ feminists whose goal is to eradicate the traditional family and destroy marriage;³² liberal judges who are hijacking America and allowing activists to ram an anti-Christian, anti-family agenda into mainstream America;³³ and the homosexual movement.³⁴

25 David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 3, 88-89.

26 Michael Luo and Laurie Goodstein, “Emphasis Shifts for New Breed of Evangelicals,” *New York Times* (May 21, 2007): A1. Cited 19 November 2008. Online: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/21/us/21evangelical.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=new+breed+of+evangelicals&st=nyt&oref=slogin.

27 Sean Hannity, *Deliver Us from Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism, and Liberalism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 4-5. See also Newt Gingrich, *Winning the Future: A 21st Century Contract with America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2005), xiii-xiv. Gingrich begins his book with a diagnostic test of ten short statements including: “everyone should learn English”; “schools should teach new immigrants about American values”; I am “proud to be an American”; I “believe in God”; “The United States should put its own interests first.” The higher one’s score on this test the more he or she favors the family destructive “secular left-liberal system.” The lower one’s score the more he or she leans toward “traditional American values,” xi-x.

28 Alan Sears and Craig Osten, *The ACLU vs. America* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 5-6.

29 Gingrich, *Winning the Future*, xiii. Similarly, Robert H. Bork states, “There is currently a widespread sense that the distinctive virtues of American life, indeed the distinctive features of Western civilization, are in peril in ways not previously seen. . . . The enemy within is modern liberalism, *Slouching toward Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 4.

30 Tim LaHaye and David Noebel, *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* (Nashville: Word, 2000); see also the evangelical ministry The Christian Voice which identifies secular humanism as the primary threat to the family and the moral fiber of our nation. *The Christian Voice*, “About Us,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008] Online: <http://www.christianvoiceonline.com>.

31 Tom Delay, *No Retreat, No Surrender: One American’s Fight* (New York: Sentinel, 2007), 38, 172-78; Rick Santorum, *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good* (2nd ed.; Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006).

32 Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide: The Fall of Liberalism and the Rise of Common Sense* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 186-89. Phyllis Schlafly, *Feminist Fantasies* (Dallas: Spence, 2003). Among conservative evangelicals, one of the most detailed assertions that feminism is one of the greatest enemies of the family is by Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture* (rev. ed.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

33 D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *How Would Jesus Vote?: A Christian Perspective on the Issues* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook, 2008), 174. Similarly, James Dobson declares Justice Anthony Kennedy, the judge who wrote the majority opinion in *Lawrence vs. Texas* (overthrowing laws prohibiting sodomy), “the most dangerous man in America,” in James Dobson and Shirley Dobson, *Marriage under Fire* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 40-41. For a thorough PFV’s treatment of the judiciary, see Phyllis Schlafly, *The Supremacists: The Tyranny of Judges and How to Stop It* (Dallas: Spence, 2004).

34 For a more academic assertion of how and why homosexuals seek to destroy traditional marriage, see Daniel R. Heimbach, “Deconstructing the Family,” *The Religion and Society Report* Online Edition, 22:7 (2005). n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: http://www.profam.org/pub/rs/rs_2207.htm.

The homosexual movement is most repeatedly and emphatically identified as the great enemy of the family. James Dobson declares that for sixty years the homosexual movement has sought to destroy the family and it is now an overwhelming “tsunami” so that, “barring a miracle the family as it has been known from time immemorial will crumble.”³⁵ Hence, “Western civilization itself appears to hang in the balance.”³⁶ Louis Sheldon is even more pointed in identifying “the homosexual threat.” He asserts that the family is “the foundation and building block of the community and the cornerstone of social well being. Yet, this is now the target of the homosexual agenda. . . . The great aim of the homosexual lobby . . . is to eradicate the moral framework of American society.” Furthermore, we who believe in the traditional family and God are in a battle to the death against “the forces of darkness and legions of angry homosexuals and lesbians determined to abolish Christian virtue and moral judgment in any form.”³⁷

Many PFVs personalize their opponents since they believe their “liberal” enemies want to harm them and take away their liberties. Thus, much of the PFVs literature chronicles specific instances of persecution against Christians and warns of even greater persecution as religious liberties continue to erode.³⁸ Orchestrated malevolence toward Christians is often attributed to homosexuals. For instance, Janet Folger argues that “the ultimate goal of the homosexual movement is the criminalization of Christianity.” Hence, “the greatest threat to our freedoms comes from the homosexual agenda.”³⁹ At best, the opponents of traditional values/family values are repeatedly described as being guilty of systematic slander and verbal attack against conservatives in general and Christians in particular.⁴⁰

Given the black and white manner in which PFVs view the enemies of the family, it is no surprise that they continually employ militaristic language to describe how we must respond to the enemies of the family and traditional values who have hijacked America. PFVs declare, “We have not yet begun to fight.”⁴¹ America—with its traditional family values—is “our country,” so “let’s take it back.”⁴² We “must be willing to fight. . . . We must resist them at every turn.”⁴³ The enemies of the family (homosexuals) have left us with only two options, “either meekly acquiesce to a wide range of revolutionary cultural demands, or stand up and fight.”⁴⁴ We must boldly stand up and take back America from the enemies.⁴⁵

35 James Dobson, *Marriage under Fire*, 20-21.

36 Ibid., 27.

37 Louis P. Sheldon, *The Agenda: The Homosexual Plan to Change America* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2005), 8, 240.

38 D. James Kennedy, *The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail: The Attack on Christianity and What You Need to Know to Combat It* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996); Robertson, *The Turning Tide*, 305-20. See also *Speechless: Silencing the Christians*, a seven episode DVD set hosted by Janet Parshall. This educational tool has a web site (<http://www.silencingchristians.com>) and is being broadcast nationally.

39 Janet L. Folger, *The Criminalization of Christianity* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2005), 14, 16; see also Sears and Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda*.

40 Ann Coulter, *Slander: Liberal Lies about the American Right* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 166-96. This book was at the top of the New York Times best seller list for seven weeks. The irony is that, while Coulter opines against slandering liberals (the last line of the book asserts that they are often “savagely cruel bigots who hate ordinary Americans and lie for sport”), she is notorious for her outlandish, cruel statements towards others. For instance, she describes housewives whose husbands were killed in the 9/11 attack as follows: “These broads are millionaires, lionized on TV and in articles about them, reveling in their status as celebrities and stalked by grief-arazzis. I’ve never seen people enjoying their husbands’ deaths so much,” *Godless: The Church of Liberalism* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 103. On “The Big Idea” show with host Donny Deutsch in 2006, she said President Clinton showed “some level of latent homosexuality.” Later she told Chris Matthews on MSNBC that former Vice President Al Gore was a “total fag.”

41 D. James Kennedy, “Forward: We Have Not Yet Begun to Fight,” in *The Salt and Light Solution: A Guide to Reclaiming America for Christ* (Reclaiming America for Christ Conference; Fort Lauderdale, FL: Coral Ridge Ministries, 1999), vii-ix.

42 Dick Army, “Let’s Take It Back,” in *The Salt and Light Solution*, 8-9. Army is a former congressman who served as the House Majority Leader from 1985 to 2003.

43 Sean Hannity, *Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty Over Liberalism* (New York: Regan, 2002), 294-95.

44 Dobson, *Marriage under Fire*, 66.

45 Sears and Osten, *The ACLU vs. America*, 189-93.

We must “blast the enemy from its positions.”⁴⁶ We must launch a counter offensive against the enemy (homosexual activists) and “engage this perverse enemy in every area of society.”⁴⁷

PFVs’ strategy for fighting and defeating the enemies of the family most often centers on gaining and utilizing social and particularly political power. James Kennedy asserts that the heart of America’s moral problem, including decaying family values, is that Christians are not in the positions of social and political power. We need to be “the controlling force” passing the laws, printing the books, and controlling the television networks.⁴⁸ While noting the importance of local, “grassroots” influence, Marlin Maddoux argues that the “ultimate goal” is to claim the top of the “power pyramid.” Hence, “if we have any hope of saving our country,” we must “take back the Congress.”⁴⁹ Dobson declares that the key to defeating the greatest threat to marriage in the history of civilization, homosexual activists, is to pass a Federal Marriage Amendment.⁵⁰ Pat Robertson says the key to “turning the tide” against the liberal forces attacking the family is to elect more “pro-family activist” political office holders, for then “the bureaucracy will be changed, and along with it the entire liberal agenda.”⁵¹ One final reoccurring strategy is for Christians to assert their legal rights.⁵²

3. Core Values and Concerns

Since the political process is so important to PFVs, the popular voters’ guides produced by various PFVs’ organizations are a particularly telling measurement of their core values and concerns. I have analyzed the content of over a dozen PFVs’ voters’ guides and found that, on the whole, PFVs’ voters’ guides are remarkably homogeneous in content and appear to reflect very similar concerns, perspectives, and ideologies. One of the greatest emphases in the guides is on homosexuality—supporting a federal marriage amendment effectively banning gay marriage, and in some instances questioning support for other types of homosexual rights and protections. Most reflect a primary concern for small government and lower taxes. Most reflect an unqualified pro business and pro military ideology. Noticeably lacking in almost all of the PFVs’ voters’ guides, designed to help the reader determine which candidates are most “pro family,” are any questions that would reflect concern for the rights of workers and their families, the rights and needs of the poor and their families, the right and needs of immigrants and their families, the right and needs of ethnic minority families, the potential for big business to take advantage of workers and their families, or the reality and impact of physical and sexual abuse on families. In short, it might be logically concluded from the voters’ guides that the rights and well being of middle and upper class white Christians is a primary concern to PFVs. These same omissions are frequent in PFVs’ books and web sites.⁵³ A specific analysis of some of the more popular PFVs’ voters’ guides reveals the following.

46 Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide*, 301.

47 Rick Scarborough, *Liberalism Kills Kids* (Lufkin, TX: Vision America, 2006), 205. Scarborough is the founder of Vision America and is endorsed by James Dobson, Alan Keyes, D. James Kennedy, Tim LaHaye, and Rick Perry, Governor of Texas.

48 D. James Kennedy, *The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail*, 199; see also Robertson, *The Turning Tide*, 301.

49 Marlin Maddoux, *A Christian Agenda: Game Plan for a New Era* (Dallas: International Christian Media, 1993), 89-90. Maddoux, who died in 2004, was a very influential radio broadcaster and the founder of the USA Radio Network.

50 Dobson, *Marriage under Fire*, 79.

51 Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide*, 65.

52 Kennedy, *The Gates of Hell*, 243-47; Reed, *Active Faith*, 246-57; see also the Family Research Council’s web site which has as one of its primary resources for pastors a “Legal FAQ” created in partnership with the Alliance Defense Fund “to help pastors and churches understand their liberties” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?c=PASTORS>.

53 A notable recent exception is Harry R. Jackson Jr. and Tony Perkins, *Personal Faith, Public Policy* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2008). Perkins and Jackson consider themselves part of the “Religious Right” and can be fairly identified as PFVs. In spite of their unfortunate assertion that most Americans who fall below the poverty line are not really poor (99-100), they show much more sensitivity to the needs of the poor, ethnic minorities, and the oppressed than most PFVs. Theirs is also one of the few PFVs books that asserts all Americans should have access to health care (124), that develops a “pro life” position considerably beyond abortion/cloning and extends it to the mistreatment of POWs, child abuse, the elderly, sex trafficking, and illegal immigrants (59-60, 70-78, 81-95).

The American Family Association (AFA), one of the largest and most active PFV organizations, issues a voters' guide used by many evangelicals and conservative churches. It claims to have over two million online supporters, run a web site which receives over five million visitors per month, and own and operate close to two hundred radio stations across the country.⁵⁴ Its 2008 *Presidential Primary Voter's Guide* contains nine short easy to use questions, since all are framed in such a manner that the moral, pro family answer is clearly understood to be "yes."⁵⁵ The nine questions deal with abortion and human life, a constitutional marriage amendment, gun owner rights, opposition to pro homosexual curriculum and gay pride celebrations, business freedom, and the Iraq war. Almost half of the questions (four) deal directly with homosexuality. Several other PFV organizations offer voters' guides that are almost identical to this one.⁵⁶ An evaluation of several other lengthier PFVs' voters' guides reveals all of the same core concerns and ideology with a few additional questions about issues such as pornography, the environment, parental rights, and border security.⁵⁷

4. Affirmations

I affirm many of the cardinal values and assertions of the PFVs. I wholeheartedly agree that the traditional family is the cornerstone of human society and it is in trouble. Furthermore, I embrace the conviction that the traditional family composed of one husband and one wife united for life is what God instituted in the Garden of Eden. So sexual relations outside of heterosexual marriage are forbidden by Scripture and not in individuals' or societies' best interest.⁵⁸ The creation account, along with many other Scripture passages, convinces me that all life is sacred and should be valued and protected. This certainly includes unborn children.⁵⁹ At the same time, I and many other evangelicals who deeply value the family and want to nurture and protect it are deeply troubled by much of the agenda, strategies, and impact of PFVs. My concerns largely revolve around what I believe are misplaced emphases and misunderstandings of the issues.

54 "What is AFA?" n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://media.afa.net/newdesign/about.asp>.

55 "AFA 2008 Presidential Primary Voters Guide," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.afa.net/pdfs/08vg.pdf>; accessed 8/2/08.

56 "Christian Coalition Voter's Guide for 'Pro-family' voters, [2006] AZ Guide," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.cc.org/voterguides2006/Arizona-Senate%20and%20House.pdf>; The Florida Family Council, "Voter's Guide 2008 Presidential Primary," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: http://www.flfamily.org/welcome_letter.php?aboutid=3; The Wallbuilders, "Voter Guide 2008 Presidential Primary," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=5386>.

57 For instance, The Family Research Council Voter's Guide has questions about border security, gun control, parental rights, religious liberty, border security, the federal estate tax, and government land seizure. "Values Voter Guide for 2008 Presidential Candidates," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://downloads.frcaction.org/EF/EF08B08.pdf>. Concerned Women of America's Voter's Guide has eleven categories of quotes from candidates, including all of the expected categories with the additions of energy and the environment, "2004 general election Presidential Voter's Guide," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=6591&department=CWA&categoryid=misc>. The Center for Arizona Policy Voter's Guide had thirteen questions dealing with taxes, abortion, religious rights, and gay rights, including five questions on pornography and sexually oriented businesses, "2007 Voter's Guide Survey Questions [Tucson City Election]," n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <https://www.azpolicy.org/pdf/vgtuccity07print.pdf>.

58 For a basic overview of the biblical and scientific evidence for a sexual abstinence outside of marriage, see Steven R. Tracy, "Chastity and the Goodness of God: The Case for Premarital Sexual Abstinence," *Themelios* 31 (2006): 54-71. On the biblical/theological arguments that homosexual practice is morally forbidden, see Thomas Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995) and Donald Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). On the scientific and social science data arguing against homosexuality being a genetically determined lifestyle no more or less healthy than heterosexual marriage, see Stanton L. Jones & Mark Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007); Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

59 One of the best recent philosophical and legal defenses of the pro life position on abortion is Francis J. Beckwith, *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007). On the biblical and scientific pro life arguments, see J. P. Moreland & Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 231-60.

II. Observation and Confession

1. Observation

The “family values” strategy of the past twenty-five years does not appear to be working. For some three decades, PFVs have created numerous large and well funded non-profit organizations, developed extensive ministries reaching millions, and have carried out effective political strategies. They are largely responsible for putting President George W. Bush in office. But, upon closer inspection, it seems PFVs have gained power and won elections, but have largely failed to win hearts or greatly strengthen families. For instance, when non Christian young adults (ages 16 to 29) were asked about their perceptions of Christians in a major national survey, their four most common perceptions were that Christians are: anti-homosexual (91%), judgmental (87%), hypocritical (85%), and too involved in politics (75%).⁶⁰ I believe the rhetoric and strategies of PFVs largely accounts for these perceptions. Other studies of non Christians yield similar perceptions of Christians.⁶¹ Furthermore, the sexual behavior of Christians and the condition of their families is not significantly different from that of non Christians. Given the fact that PFVs are perhaps best known for condemning the sexual sins of unbelievers and for asserting that homosexual unions are not true marriages, this makes evangelical PFVs look quite hypocritical. While surprisingly little research has been conducted on the impact of religion on abortion, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and sexual activity rates among adolescents and young adults, the few studies which have been done suggest that the sexual behaviors of evangelical youth are not significantly different than those of non-evangelical youth⁶² and that differences that exist do not last.⁶³ In fact, one of the largest (and most recent) studies found that evangelical youth begin having sex at a younger age than their liberal Protestant peers and are far more likely to have had three or more sexual partners than their non-evangelical peers (13.7% versus 8.9%).⁶⁴ Other studies of the influence of evangelical “family values” strategies on actual behaviors suggest the influence is superficial: we live like the unbelievers we condemn. For instance, a staggering percentage of evangelicals view pornography. According to a Christianity Today survey published in 2001, 33% of clergy and 36% of laity admitted visiting porn sites.⁶⁵ A 2003 survey by Today’s Christian Woman found that 34% of their female readers admitted to intentional access of Internet porn.⁶⁶ Research by the Barna Group on self-professed “born-again” similarly found that there was no difference evident between “born-again” and “non-born-again” when it came to the likelihood of viewing pornography, in spite of the fact that “born-again” were

60 David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 27.

61 For instance, a Lifeway Research study of the unchurched conducted in 2007 found that a full 72% believe the church is full of hypocrites. Mark Kelley, “LifeWay Research Unchurched Americans Turned Off by Church, Open to Christians,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%2C1703%2CA%2523D166950%252526M%25253D200906%2C00.html.

62 Amy Adamczyk, “The Effects of Religious Contextual Norms, Structural Constraints, and Personal Religiosity on Abortion Decisions,” *Social Science Research* 37 (2008): 657–72; Rachel K. Jones, Jacqueline E. Darroch, and Susheela Singh, “Religious Differentials in the Sexual and Reproductive Behaviors of Young Women in the United States,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36 (2005): 279–88; Gregory S. Paul, “Cross-National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with Popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies,” *Journal of Religion and Society* 7 (2005): n.p. [Cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-11.html>.

63 One of the few studies conducted on the impact of Protestant religion on the sexual behavior of adolescents found that fundamentalist white women in the 1980s, when “family values” organizations had begun to be highly active in promoting sexual abstinence, were significantly less likely than other women to have sex before marriage, but, once they became sexually active, these differences largely vanished, Karin L. Brewster, et al., “The Changing Impact of Religion on the Sexual and Contraceptive Behavior of Adolescent Women in the United States,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60 (1998): 493–504.

64 Gene Edward Veith, “Sex and the Evangelical Teen,” *World Magazine* 22:29 (August 11, 2007): 9. This article is reporting on the work of sociologist Mark Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex & Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

65 Christian J. Gardner, “Tangled in the Worst of the Web,” *Christianity Today* 45:4 (March 5, 2001): 42–49.

66 Ramona Richards, “Dirty Little Secret,” *Today’s Christian Woman*, 25:5 (September/October 2003): 58.

twice as likely not to watch a movie because of its rating.⁶⁷ Finally, when it comes to divorce, perhaps the acid test of the effectiveness of “family values” efforts, Christians divorce at rates similar to non Christians.⁶⁸

2. Confession

I am ashamedly confessional when I assert that many of us have been largely misguided in the “family values” culture war. I stand condemned by much of what I am about to say. I have spent all too many years smugly proud of my self-righteousness and pro-family theology, calling myself a Christian leader, yet all the while failing to live like my savior, whose “family values” methodology focused not on attacking broken sinners but attacking the self-righteous religious conservatives like me and embracing broken sinners in the most costly, risky manner imaginable. I confess that all too often I have looked at homosexuals, militant feminists, and even inner-city single mothers who live on welfare with disdain and at times contempt. Surely my self-righteousness and disdain for sinners is one of the most anti-Christian and anti-family postures one could have. Furthermore, for all too many years, and all too often in the present, I have arrogantly condemned theological liberals for ignoring a few select biblical texts about sexuality while I myself ignored literally hundreds of biblical passages about justice and mercy for the oppressed and abused. I continue to struggle to take the commands of Scripture seriously and to love and sacrifice as I am commanded. So I confess that, as I critique the religious right for their approach to “family values” and at times reflect deep frustration and even anger at their tactics and actions, my own failures are no less odious in God’s nostrils.

III. Specific Concerns about How We Are Often Waging the Family Values War

1. We Often Use the Wrong Moral Template

Evangelical PFVs tend to focus on holiness or righteousness as the dominant template for determining morality. This helps explain their fixation with homosexuality and corresponding lack of attention to numerous other moral issues such as the rights and needs of immigrants, women, the poor, etc. Some evangelical PFVs would object to criticism of the narrowness of their stated concerns by retorting that they are simply prioritizing the most important issues, not denying the validity of others.⁶⁹ But that is precisely the problem—they are using the wrong moral template. In the first century, the Pharisees elevated holiness or righteousness as the quintessential guide for morality. Hence, much of the conflict they had with Jesus was over issues of ceremonial or social purity.⁷⁰ For instance, when the Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with tax collectors and other impure “sinners,” Jesus asserted that they had missed the heart of biblical morality, which is mercy for the broken: “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this [Hosea 6:6] means, ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt 9:12-13). In other words, Jesus, drawing on the moral tradition of the Hebrew Prophets, gives us a pivotal moral template, namely, mercy for the broken. The Hebrew Scriptures develop this ethic in terms of mercy and justice. Mercy is an active commitment to alleviate human suffering regardless of the cause. Justice is an active commitment to insure that all humans, particularly those with the least status and power (since they are most often recipients of injustice) are treated with value, respect, and fairness. It also means standing with the oppressed, fighting against oppression, and confronting oppressors.

67 “Survey Shows Faith Impacts Some Behaviors but Not Others” in *The Barna Update* (Oct 22, 2002): n.p. [cited 21 May 2009]. Online: <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/83-survey-shows-faith-impacts-some-behaviors-but-not-others>.

68 One Barna study found that, among adults who have been married, born again Christians and non-Christians have essentially the same probability of divorce (about 33%). “The Year’s Most Intriguing Findings, From Barna Research Studies” in *The Barna Update* (December 17, 2001): n.p. [cited 21 May 2009]. Online: <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/64-the-years-most-intriguing-findings-from-barna-research-studies>.

69 Richard Land, *The Divided States of America* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 23-25.

70 Matt 9:9-12; 15:1-20; 23:23-28; Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-41; 15:1-31.

There is a growing body of evangelical scholarship demonstrating that justice and mercy, especially for the vulnerable, oppressed, and broken, is a canon-wide, moral priority.⁷¹ So I will simply summarize some of the strands of biblical data supporting this thesis: (1.) It explains what God desires of his people⁷² and “what it means to know God” (Jer 22:3, 13-17). (2.) It offers some of the surest evidence of conversion and godliness.⁷³ Hence, care for the hungry, naked, sick, and imprisoned is the basis for the final judgment (Matt 25:31-46). (3.) It forms the basis for particularly rich blessings⁷⁴ and particularly harsh judgment.⁷⁵ (4.) It lay at the heart of Jesus’ ministry and message.⁷⁶ In Jesus’ first public sermon recorded in Luke, he summarized his ministry as a divine anointing to set captives free and release the oppressed (Luke 4:18-21; Is 61:1-4).⁷⁷

We can now bring this discussion back to family values. Using the wrong moral template of holiness/righteousness instead of a template of justice and mercy has led to some glaring and damaging inconsistencies in our use of Scripture. For instance, one of the more frequent assertions of evangelical PFVs toward theological liberals is that the latter do not truly respect or submit to the Scriptures, especially regarding currently unpopular teachings that are not “politically correct.” So evangelical PFVs frequently, boldly, and sometimes stridently use Sodom and Gomorrah to demonstrate God’s condemnation of homosexuality. For instance, one influential denominational leader states, “Homosexuality is an abomination to God...the proof of which is in God’s own version of the Extreme Makeover at Sodom and Gomorrah.”⁷⁸ Other PFVs, including one former denominational vice president, insist on referring to homosexuals as “sodomites.”⁷⁹ There are solid exegetical reasons for asserting that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were judged for homosexual acts,⁸⁰ but biblical “sodomy” relates to social justice for the poor and oppressed

71 There is a large body of literature on this multi-faceted subject. The following are some of the works I have personally found most helpful: Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1999); Ron Sider, *Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Ron Sider, “Justice, Human Rights, and Government: Toward an Evangelical Perspective,” in *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy*, eds. Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 163-193; Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 5th ed (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2005); Glen H. Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2003); John Stott, *Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

72 Amos 5:11, 21-24; Micah 6:8; 7:2-3; Jas 1:27.

73 Job 29:12-17; 31:13-22; Ps 112:1-9; Prov 31:20; 29:7; Jer 22:3, 13-17; Ezek 18:5-17; Matt 25:33-46; Luke 19:5-9; 1 John 3:16-18.

74 Ps 41:1; Prov 19:17; 22:9; Is 33:14-17; 56:1-2; 58:6-14; Jer 22:3-5; Luke 14:12-14.

75 Ex 22:22-24; Is 5:6-8; 59:1-4, 7-9, 12-15; Ezek 22:27-31; Joel 3:19. The Babylonian captivity was God’s judgment for Judah’s failure to practice justice and mercy to the poor, marginalized, and oppressed (Jer 7:5-15; Ezek 22:27-31; Zech 7:7-14).

76 Is 11:3-5; 16:5; 42:1-7; Matt 9:9-12; 35-36. Stassen and Gushee are particularly helpful in demonstrating that love and justice lie at the heart of Jesus’ “kingdom ethic” which in turn is drawn from the Hebrew prophetic tradition, particularly Isaiah, *Kingdom Ethics*. See also Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); John Stott, *Human Rights and Human Wrongs*.

77 On the manner in which Jesus’ first public sermon in Luke summarizes his ministry and message, see Joel Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 76-101.

78 Kenyn M. Cureton, “Stand for Marriage,” n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.baptist2baptist.net/b2barticle.asp?ID=289>; accessed 8/18/08. Cureton was Vice President for Convention Relations and served on the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

79 See statements by pastor and talk show host Wiley Drake, who was elected second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2006 and was an unsuccessful candidate for the denominational presidency in 2008, Bob Allen, “SBC Officer Faulted for Support of Killer,” *Ethics Daily*, April 27, 2007.

80 John Boswell and others have argued that Sodom and Gomorrah were merely judged for inhospitality. However, Lot’s offer of his virgin daughter in response to the men’s desire “to know” the visitors (Gen 19:5-8), the literary structure of Gen 18-19 and Judg 19, the reference in Ezek 16:50 to their sin as an abomination (cf. Ezek 22:11; 33:26, where this term is clearly sexual), and the explanation in Jude 7 that Sodom and Gomorrah “indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh” all indicate they were condemned for sexual sin, Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007) 145-49, 162-64; James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 38-40; Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001).

as surely as it relates to homosexual practice. In fact, Sodom's apathy toward the poor is the only sin expressly cited by the prophet Ezekiel: "This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy" (Ezek 16:49). The Genesis account of Sodom and Gomorrah also links "sodomy" with mistreatment of the vulnerable for "the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah" is what stimulated divine judgment (Gen 18:20, ESV). The Hebrew word used for "outcry" (za'áqat) "is a technical word for the cry of pain or the cry for help from those who are being oppressed or violated."⁸¹ Jeremiah 23:10-14 also links the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah with the unjust use of power (v. 10b) and with spiritual leaders who "strengthen the hands of evildoers" (v. 14). A study of Jeremiah strongly suggests that the latter involves the prophets and priests' collaboration with the rich and powerful to defraud, oppress, and abuse the weak.⁸²

Thus, condemnation of the kind of biblical "sodomy" which harms families must include a condemnation of oppression and abuse of the weak and indifference by the wealthy toward the poor.⁸³ One searches far and wide to find a single PFVs who makes such a biblical connection in spite of the fact that thirty-seven million Americans live in poverty⁸⁴ and one in five Americans (59 million people) are currently not able to obtain or have to delay needed medical care.⁸⁵ This connection is also absent in PFVs public policies. For instance, one of the clearer examples of the way the wealthy oppress the vulnerable poor is seen in the proliferation of "pay day" loan companies which charge exorbitant fees (450% on average) for short term loans to the poor. A recent study found that a \$325 two week loan would typically carry a finance charge of \$52, yet the average borrower, being poor and economically desperate, cannot pay the loan off promptly and ends up paying approximately \$793 on a \$325 loan.⁸⁶ Amazingly, this same study found a strong positive correlation between the geographic national density of payday lenders and the political clout of conservative Christians. In other words, the largest concentration of these predatory lenders is found in the very areas where PFVs have the greatest political clout. Oppression of the poor is not on the conservative "family values" radar.

2. We Often Prioritize the Wrong Families

We noted earlier that PFVs tend to prioritize the needs and concerns of traditional, middle, and upper middle class Christian families. This focus may reflect myopic self interests; it may also reflect a defensive reaction toward social liberals who seek to downplay the importance of the traditional family. Yet, we do not strengthen the traditional family by prioritizing it. The very Scriptures that

81 Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2006), 359; see also Richard Nelson Boyce, *The Cry to God in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). za'áqat is used to refer to the cry of the poor (Prov 21:13), outcry due to famine and destruction (Jer 18:22), and the cries of the oppressed and afflicted (Job 16:18; Is 15:5; 65:19), including the oppressed Israelites (Neh 5:6; 9:9; Esth 9:31).

82 Cf. Jer 2:26-34; 5:25-31; 6:13-15; 7:3-11; 17:11; 19:1-5; 22:1-4, 13-17; 23:2-5, 13-17; 30:10-12; 32:32-35; cp. Lam 2:14; 4:13-14.

83 William H. Brownlee thus states, "'Sodomy' (so-called) in Genesis is basically oppression of the weak and helpless," in *Ezekiel 1-19* (WBC 28; Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 248.

84 Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Cheryl Hill Lee, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-229, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2005).

85 Peter J. Cunningham and Laurie E. Felland, "Falling Behind: Americans' Access to Medical Care Deteriorates, 2003-2007," *Tracking Report* 19 (June 2008): 1-5. Cited 19 November 2008. Online: <http://www.hschange.org/CONTENT/993/?topic=topic02>. This figure is for 2007 and represents a dramatic increase (39%) from 36 million people in 2003.

86 Christopher Lewis Peterson and Steven M. Graves, "Usury Law and the Christian Right: Faith Based Political Power and the Geography of the American Payday Loan Regulation," *Catholic University Law Review* 57 (2008): 637-700. On the actual costs of payday loans see Uriah King, Leslie Parrish, and Ozlem Tanik, "Financial Quicksand: Payday Lending Sinks Borrowers in Debt with \$4.2 Billion in Predatory Fees Every Year" (Durham, NC: Center for Responsible Lending, 2006), Online: http://www.responsiblelending.org/pdfs/rr012exec-Financial_Quicksand-1106.pdf. On the systemic injustice of traditional banks and pay day loans toward the poor, see Steven M. Graves, "Landscapes of Predation, Landscapes of Neglect: A Location Analysis of Payday Lenders and Banks," *The Professional Geographer* 55 (2004): 303-17.

affirm life-long heterosexual marriage as the divinely ordained cornerstone for human society⁸⁷ place tremendous emphasis on the proper treatment and care of “non-traditional” families, particularly single parent, immigrant, ethnic minority, and poor families. Scripture consistently and emphatically prioritizes the rights and needs of “widows,” “orphans,” “aliens,” “strangers,” and the “poor.”⁸⁸ These are not entirely distinct groups, for they share a critical common experience: they lack power, status, and material resources. Thus, they often experience deprivation and suffering and are vulnerable to oppression and various forms of injustice. For this reason, Scripture frequently combines two or more of these marginalized, needy groups, almost always making them the prioritized recipients of care and protection.⁸⁹ The extent to which God prioritizes such non-traditional families is evidenced in hundreds of different Scripture passages.⁹⁰ Religious and civic leaders have a particular responsibility to protect, insure justice, and provide material care for the marginalized.⁹¹ Those with food and other material resources are obligated to share with the hungry and respond to the cries of the needy.⁹² Craig Blomberg carefully analyzes the biblical theology of possessions found in each genre of the Hebrew Scriptures. His summary is quite applicable to American “family values” debates. He states, “The key to evaluating any individual church or nation in terms of its use of material possessions (personally, collectively, or institutionally) is how well it takes care of the poor and powerless in its midst.”⁹³

All too often non-evangelical PFVs patronize and even deprecate the poor, single mothers, and immigrants. For instance, Robert Bork, in a book praised by other influential PFVs such as Ralph Reed, Michael Novak, and William Bennett, ridicules the concept of “social justice” for the poor and suggests that the only real moral problem with inequalities of wealth is created by the poor who envy the rich and want to see them fail.⁹⁴ His utter disdain for the marginalized is staggering when he argues that our social policies have created a large class of dependent people, particularly single mothers, who are “of substandard intelligence, self-discipline, and motivation; otherwise they would not be in the predicament they are.” They are in fact of such poor character that they are virtually uneducable, are “unlikely to [ever] make good employees,” and will always be a drain on society.⁹⁵ Evangelical PFVs are more respectful of the marginalized, particularly of the poor, but often fail to understand or truly prioritize the marginalized. This is particularly seen in the “compassionate conservatism” embraced by the Bush administration and most evangelical PFVs.⁹⁶ The widely recognized manifesto for “compassionate conservatism” was written by Marvin Olasky in the early nineties.⁹⁷ It largely explains the evangelical PFVs’ public policies and responses to poor families. Olasky (and most evangelical PFVs) correctly note that government assistance can create unhealthy dependency, consistently

87 On “family” in Scripture, see Ken M. Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R., eds., *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Household and House Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Leo G. Perdue, et al., eds., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

88 Unfortunately D. James Kennedy distorts biblical teaching on justice as well as mercy by asserting that biblical justice “is blind” and “must treat all people equally” without consideration of their marginalization or economic standing (“class,” “race,” or “gender”), *How Would Jesus Vote?*, 113.

89 For instance, in the NASV, “widow(s)” is found in 90 verses, “orphan(s)” in 36 verses, “poor” in 136 verses, “alien(s)” in 73 verses, and “stranger” in 36 verses. “Orphan(s)” and “widow(s)” occur together in 28 passages (in a three verse context) and all but three of the 36 references to “orphan(s)” occur with another marginalized group.

90 Pss 68:5; 146:7-9; cf. also Job 5:11-15; Pss 113:5-9; 140:12.

91 Lev 19:15; Job 34:17-28; Pss 72:1-4, 11-14; 82:1-8; Prov 29:14; 31:8-9; Is 1:17; 10:1-3; Dan 4:27; Ezek 22:25-31.

92 Deut 15:7-11; 24:17-22; Prov 21:13; Ezek 16:49-50.

93 Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 84.

94 Bork, *Slouching towards Gomorrah*, 68-75. In view of Ezek 16:49, this book title is particularly disturbing.

95 Ibid., 162-63.

96 Note, for instance, that George W. Bush wrote the forward to Marvin Olasky’s book *Compassionate Conservatism: What It Is, What It Does, and How It Can Transform America* (New York: Free Press, 2000), xi-xiii.

97 Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regenery Gateway, 1992). This book strongly influenced the second George Bush administration and the Republican Party. For instance, House Speaker Next Gingrich gave it to all incoming freshmen Congressmen in 1994.

receiving money one does nothing to work for can be very damaging to one's character and self esteem, and human needs are best met by other humans rather than by impersonal bureaucracies.

Unfortunately, Olasky, and the majority of PFVs who follow his model, make erroneous assertions about the etiology of poverty, the essence of compassion, the character of the poor, and the potency of labor. The following four flawed assertions undermine a biblical prioritization of marginalized families:⁹⁸ (1.) Olasky views poverty as largely the result of laziness and lack of character.⁹⁹ While there are some biblical passages, especially in Proverbs, which do assign blame to the poor for their condition,¹⁰⁰ Scripture overwhelmingly attributes poverty to other external factors, particularly oppression.¹⁰¹ Oppression continues to be a major factor in American poverty. For instance, a twenty-five city study commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Mayors identified domestic violence as a main cause of homelessness in almost 40% of the cities studied.¹⁰² The long-term impact of childhood physical and sexual abuse is also a major factor in American homelessness.¹⁰³ (2.) Olasky asserts: it is good for the lazy and immoral to suffer and hence it is not compassionate to help those suffering because of their own moral failures;¹⁰⁴ we should generally not extend compassion or help to the poor and needy unless and until they repent; we should only help the "worthy" poor.¹⁰⁵ This view of compassion is supposedly grounded in the character of God who is not "a sugar daddy who merely felt sorry for people in distress."¹⁰⁶ Olasky's understanding of compassion reflects a gross distortion of Scripture. No suffering human sinner is truly "worthy" of a holy God's favor and assistance (Rom 6:23). This is precisely what makes God's grace so incredible.¹⁰⁷ He showed compassion to us while we were sinful rebels (Rom 5:8; Eph 2:1-8). It is specifically due to his compassion that God "does not deal with us according to our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities."¹⁰⁸ Hence, God calls his children to extend compassion to all who suffer and are in need, regardless of their moral condition.¹⁰⁹

98 Olasky basis his analysis on American history and gives minimal discussion to biblical texts. His historical reconstructions have been strongly criticized by various reviewers. For instance, see Kurt C. Schaefer, "The Privatizing of Compassion: A Critical Engagement with Marvin Olasky," in *Toward a Just and Caring Society: Christian Responses to Poverty in America*, ed. David P. Gushee (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 144-61.

99 Ibid., 7-12, 109-14, 119-21; see also Kennedy, who in an entire chapter on economics praises capitalism and says nothing about oppression or injustice yet emphasizes laziness as the cause of poverty ("loafers" shouldn't eat), *How Would Jesus Vote?*, 101-02.

100 Ron Sider offers a helpful summary of the causes of poverty, including: sinful personal choices (Prov 6:6-11; 14:23; 23:21); unbiblical world views; natural disasters; lack of technology; inequalities of power that are fueled by oppression, *Rich Christians*, 121-32.

101 For instance Ps 72:1-4, 12-14; Prov 14:31; Is 25:4; 58:6-7; Ezek 22:29; Amos 4:1; Jas 2:1-7; 5:1-6. Thomas D. Hanks surveys 164 biblical texts and ten Hebrew root words to support the thesis that "in biblical theology oppression is viewed as the basic cause of poverty," *God So Loved the Third World: The Biblical Vocabulary of Oppression* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 38. The most common term for the poor in the OT (80 occurrences) is 'ānī, and it connotes economic oppression, unjust legal treatment, and victimization by means of deception, J. David Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," *ABD*, 408. Similarly, Christopher J. H. Wright argues that oppression is "by far the major recognized cause of poverty" in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the OT, "poverty is caused. And the primary cause is the exploitation of others by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor," *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004) 170.

102 The United States Conference of Mayors, "Hunger and Homelessness Survey: A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, a 25-City Survey," (2003): 71-72; Cited 19 November 2008. Online: <http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/hungersurvey/2003/online-report/HungerAndHomelessnessReport2003.pdf>.

103 Angela Browne, "Family Violence and Homelessness: The Relevance of Trauma Histories in the Lives of Homeless Women," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 63 (1993): 370-84; Nadine Rayburn, et al., "Trauma, Depression, Coping, and Mental Health Service Seeking among Impoverished Women," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 73 (2005): 667-77.

104 Olasky, *Tragedy of American Compassion*, 8-11, 230.

105 Ibid., 12, 104-13, 217-19.

106 Ibid., 113.

107 Eph 2:1-10 says while we were dead in our sins, following the path of Satan, living in and indulging our sinful lusts, God poured out his love to us in Christ. He did this in order to show the "riches of his grace."

108 Ps 103:8-10; cf. also Rom 5:8; I Tim 1:15-16.

109 Prov 25:21-22; Some may assert that I am idealistic about the realities of working with those who suffer due to their own irresponsibility and hence we must limit compassionate assistance. One of the best responses to this is given by

(3.) Olasky argues that we can and must discern the moral character of the poor and needy, for this is essential in identifying the “worthy” who alone should receive care. This reflects considerable naivety regarding the complexity of human behavior. It can also easily create a judgmental posture which undermines biblical compassion toward human suffering.¹¹⁰ Scripture gives us guidelines for identifying unhealthy and morally inappropriate behaviors, but only God can see a person’s heart, perfectly discern motives, capacities, and vulnerabilities, and assign the appropriate moral judgment. This principle is particularly relevant to the negative effects of deprivation, trauma, and abuse and the vulnerabilities they can create which can in turn greatly increase the likelihood of poverty and other forms of suffering. For instance, childhood abuse often creates long-term shame, emotional distress, and intrusive memories. Hence, abuse survivors often chemically numb their pain and in time become alcoholics and addicts.¹¹¹ Chemical addiction in turn dramatically increases the likelihood of poverty. Similarly, childhood sexual abuse is strongly correlated with increased levels of promiscuity and high risk sexual activity for male and female survivors.¹¹² This most likely reflects both the precocious sexuality created by abuse (premature sexual knowledge and experience) as well as a trauma reenactment triggered by powerlessness, especially within women. Again, such destructive sexual behavior increases the likelihood of additional suffering and deprivation. The point here is not to excuse destructive behaviors that often lead to poverty and suffering, but to note the complexity and danger of making evaluative moral judgments on the poor. Finally, even if we had the ability to discern the moral condition of the poor and denied assistance to the “unworthy,” this would inevitably compromise aid and compassion to their “worthy” children who are not responsible for their sinful choices. Given the fact that 17.8% of all American children live in poverty,¹¹³ and 35.2% and 29.1% of Black and Hispanic children under six (respectively) live in poverty,¹¹⁴ this would be a grave error. (4) Olasky repeatedly asserts the potency of individuals getting jobs and working hard as the God-ordained means of avoiding and overcoming poverty, hence making government assistance generally unnecessary and harmful.¹¹⁵ God does ordain personal responsibility and hard work, but this significantly overstates the potency

Tim Keller, who argues that we should not limit our compassion but should let “mercy limit mercy,” *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (2nd ed.; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997), 96. By this, Keller means we initially offer mercy (aid) freely, and then seek to help the person at deeper and deeper levels, which may prompt some needy people to withdraw from aid.

110 Note Matt 9:36 where Jesus looks at the multitudes with compassion, seeing their suffering state. As Jesus is the holy, sinless Son of God, one might well expect that he would first and foremost see their sin, but instead he saw the tragic results of sin in their suffering.

111 For a survey of several studies showing the greatly increased risk of alcohol and drug dependency for sexual abuse survivors, see Anna C. Salter, *Transforming Trauma: A Guide to Understanding and Treating Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 239-40. A more recent major study of adults in treatment for alcohol dependency found that almost 60% of the participants reported lifetime abuse: Christopher Rice, Cynthia D. Mohr, Frances K. Del Boca, et al., “Self-Reports of Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse in an Alcoholism Treatment Sample,” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 62 (2001): 114-23. In a recent study of middle adults (mean age 40 years) who had a court documented history of childhood abuse or neglect, the abuse survivors were found to be one and a half times more likely than the control group to have used illegal drugs the previous year, used a great number of illicit drugs, and had more substance abuse related problems than the control group: Cathy Spatz Widom, Naomi R. Marmorstein, and Helene Raskin White, “Childhood Victimization and Illicit Drug Use in Middle Adulthood,” *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 20 (2006): 394-403.

112 Mary Jane Rotheram-Borus, Karen A Mahler, and Cheryl Koopman, “Sexual Abuse History and Associated Multiple Risk Behavior in Adolescent Runaways,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 66 (1996): 390-400; Theresa E. Senn, Michael P. Carey, and Peter A. Vanable, “Childhood Sexual Abuse and Sexual Risk Behavior among Men and Women Attending a Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 74 (2006): 720-31; Maria Testa, Carol VanZile-Tamsen, and Jennifer A. Livingston, “Childhood Sexual Abuse, Relationship Satisfaction, and Sexual Risk Taking in a Community Sample of Women,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 73 (2005): 1116-24.

113 Ron Sider, *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in the United States* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 35; DeNavas-Walt et al, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004*, 18.

114 Michael Yates, “Poverty and Inequity in the Global Economy,” *Monthly Review* 55 (Feb 2004).

115 *Tragedy of American Compassion*, 6-12, 50-59, 71-79, 104-12, 121, 190, 207-16, 227-29. Similarly, Santorum, while acknowledging the “marketplace can be brutal,” still believes in it “over the power of the government” to help the poor, *It Takes a Family*, 121.

of American free market capitalism to prevent poverty. In our current economic climate, no matter how hard one works, it is extremely difficult and sometimes impossible for unskilled workers to support their families adequately with full time minimum wage employment.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, our current health care system creates tremendous challenges for the working poor and working middle class.¹¹⁷ For instance, a 2005 study led by two Harvard researchers revealed that the majority of bankruptcy filings are caused by medical debts.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, 90% of those who filed for bankruptcy because of medical debt were in the middle class, most were employed, over 75% had medical insurance at the time of the onset of illness, and before filing bankruptcy 22% had gone without food, 30% had their power shut off, and 61% had struggled without important medical care. Biblical “family values” requires us to begin to prioritize marginalized “non-traditional” families and attend to their needs in much deeper ways than we have been.

3. *We Often Focus on the Wrong Threats*

The greatest enemy of the Christian family is not homosexuals, liberal democrats, or revisionist judges bent on restricting the rights of Christians. PFVs seem to have forgotten history—Christianity often flourished in a context of oppression, persecution, and sexual hedonism. In many respects, we are our own worst enemy. Perhaps the most poignant example of this problem is the recent homosexual prostitute and drug scandal involving Ted Haggard, the former president of the National Association of Evangelicals. It is noteworthy that Jesus and the Hebrew prophets frequently and extensively warned their audiences about threats to the spiritual well-being of the community, including families. Yet, they all focused not on external but internal threats. For instance, Jesus had very little to say about the threats created by unjust Roman authorities, hostile judges, or immoral Gentiles. Rather, he trained his cannons on the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders. The Hebrew prophets did condemn pagan nations for their sin, but devoted the bulk of their rebukes to fellow Jews. Similarly, the Apostle Paul was far more concerned about the internal moral threat of the fleshly nature than the external threats of liberal unbelievers.¹¹⁹ Ironically, it seems that PFVs often have too low a view of the power of the family so they overestimate the power of outside influences. Conversely, because we often have a “Pollyanna-ish” view of the Christian home, we underestimate the threat of hypocrisy, abuse, and oppression from within. Rodney Clapp gives a helpful analysis of the true enemies of the family. He states:

If asked what most threatens families today, Christian family advocates present a list commonly including pornography, drugs, public schools and secular humanism. I agree that such factors challenge and can hinder Christian family. But two things bother me about the accepted list of enemies to the family. First, the list lets Christians off the hook. It shoves the real enemies of our family outside the camp...[Second] it does not go deep enough.

We must not let ourselves off the hook by focusing on external enemies, though this is very tempting. In spite of the external attacks on marriage, young adults still long for a loving marriage. The problem is that they have seen it so rarely that they do not believe it is possible.¹²⁰ PFVs often

116 For an excellent personal series of case studies of the difficulties of living on full time low wage jobs, see journalist Barbara Ehrenreich, “Earth to Wal-Mars,” in *Inequality Matters: The Growing Economic Divide in America and Its Poisonous Consequences*, eds. James Lardner and David A. Smith (New York: The New Press, 2005), 41-53 and *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Owl Books, 2001).

117 On the vulnerability of the fifty-four million Americans in the lower middle class, the “working nearly poor,” including their challenges in getting medical insurance and adequate health care, see Katherine S. Newman and Victor Tan Chen, *The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

118 David U. Himmelstein, et al., “Illness and Injury as Contributors to Bankruptcy,” *Health Affairs* 24 (2005): 63-73. In a subsequent article, the same authors respond to their critics, “Discounting the Debtors Will Not Make Medical Bankruptcy Disappear,” *Health Affairs* 25 (2006): 84-88.

119 Cf. Rom 7:7-35; 8:5-8; Gal 5:13-26; Eph 4:17-25; also 1 Cor 5:6-13.

120 For instance, see Jillian Straus, *Unhooked Generation: The Truth about Why We’re Still Single* (New York: Hyperion, 2006). Strauss as a secular writer argues that a high percentage of singles value marriage but avoid it because they

claim Matthew 5:13-14 when they condemn abortion and homosexuality and assert that they are being salt and light as Jesus commanded. But Jesus' command actually centers on our deeds not our words: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Protecting families by being salt and light primarily involves PFVs offering a strong winsome example of family health and sexual morality. All too often this is not the case. For instance, according to a survey of pastors conducted by *Christianity Today*, 51% of the pastors said internet pornography is a temptation for them, and over one-third admitted viewing online pornography in the previous year.¹²¹ And as we noted earlier evangelical youth are less sexually moral than their peers; evangelical divorce rates are not dramatically lower than those of the population at large.

Finally, one of the greatest threats to genuine family values is abuse. All too many Christian families experience one or more types of abuse, but evangelical PFVs rarely address the issue of abuse, and when they do they often minimize its prevalence and significance.¹²² There is a massive amount of research demonstrating the devastating impact of abuse on families. Abuse has been shown to have a dramatic role in increased rates of sexual activity among adolescents, teen pregnancy, abortion, lower marital satisfaction, and increased divorce rates.¹²³ Abuse is particularly relevant to the issue of homosexuality, because it often creates great confusion and distortion regarding gender and sexuality. For instance, in one recent study of male rape survivors, 70% reported long-term struggles with their sexual orientation and 68% questioned their masculinity.¹²⁴ In spite of denials to the contrary, abuse is prevalent in American society and American families, including Christian families.¹²⁵

have never seen a healthy one and do not believe they could create one.

121 The editors, "Pastors Viewing Internet Pornography," *Leadership* 23 (2001): 89. Similarly, a 2002 online survey of 6,000 pastors by Rick Warren revealed that 30% of the pastors admitted viewing pornography in the previous month, Mark Bergin, "Porn Again," *World Magazine* 20:16 (April 23, 2005): n.p. [cited 21 May 2009]. Online: <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/10555>.

122 On abuse prevalence and evangelicals' failure to address it, see Steven R. Tracy, "Patriarchy and Domestic Violence: Challenging Common Misconceptions," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (2007): 573-94. For examples of evangelical PFVs who minimize abuse prevalence and significance, see Beth Impson, *Called to Womanhood: The Biblical View for Today's World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 61-64; Rebecca Jones, *Does Christianity Squash Women? A Christian Looks at Womanhood* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 187; Martha Peace, *Damsels in Distress: Biblical Solutions for Problems Women Face* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 136-38.

123 For a documented survey of the effects of abuse, see John N. Briere, *Child Abuse Trauma: Theory and Treatment of the Lasting Effects* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992); Claire Burke Draucker, *Counseling Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (2nd ed.; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000); Steven R. Tracy, *Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); see also Robert F. Anda, et al., "Abused Boys, Battered Mothers, and Male Involvement in Teen Pregnancy," *Pediatrics* 107 (2001): e19. On the dramatically increased rates of abuse among women having one or more abortions, see Dore Hollander, "Does Abuse Lead to Abortion?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 30 (1998): 203; William A. Fisher, et al., "Characteristics of Women Undergoing Repeat Induced Abortion," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 172 (2005): 637-41; Anna Whitehead and Janet Fanslow, "Prevalence of Family Violence amongst Women Attending an Abortion Clinic in New Zealand," *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* 45 (2005): 321-24.

124 J. Walker, J. Archer, and M. Davies, "Effects of Rape on Men: A Descriptive Analysis," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34 (2005): 69-80. On the elevated rates of historical abuse among gays and lesbians, see S. Bryn Austin, Hee-Jin Jun, Benita Jackson, Donna Spiegelman, Janet Rich-Edwards, Heather L. Corliss, and Rosalind J. Wright, "Disparities in Child Abuse Victimization in Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Women in the Nurses' Health Study II," *Journal of Women's Health* 17 (2008): 597-606; K. F. Balsam, E. D. Rothblum, and T. P. Beauchaine, "Victimization over the Life Span: A Comparison of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Siblings," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 73 (2005): 477-87; Jessica F. Morris and Kimberly F. Balsam, "Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Experiences of Victimization: Mental Health, Revictimization, and Sexual Identity Development," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 7 (2003): 67-85.

125 Christopher G. Ellison and Kristin L. Anderson, "Religious Involvement and Domestic Violence among U.S. Couples," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40 (2001): 269-86; Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson, "Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?" *Journal of Family Issues* 20 (1999): 87-113; Steven R. Tracy, *Mending the Soul*, 13-20; "What Does 'Submit in Everything' Really Mean? The Nature and Scope of Marital Submission," *Trinity Journal*, 29:2 (Fall, 2008): 285-312.

Making matters worse, we often hypocritically fixate on the sins, particularly sexual, of non-PFVs, while ignoring or minimizing our own.¹²⁶ But judgment must begin in the household of God (1 Pet 4:17). It is patently clear that some conservative evangelical leaders live a double life and engage in the very sexual sins they so adamantly denounce from the pulpit.¹²⁷ Harmful “family values” hypocrisy is also rampant among conservative political leaders. For instance, in 2007 PFVs Congressman Larry Craig was forced to resign from the U.S. Senate due to a homosexual sex scandal. In the previous decade, there had been ten sexual scandals involving Republicans, many or most of whom were PFVs, which was twice as many as the sex scandals involving Democrats.¹²⁸ Also in 2007, David Vitter and Newt Gingrich, two other powerful evangelical PFVs congressmen, acknowledged they had been having affairs while in office.¹²⁹ The supreme irony is that all three of these men had helped lead the charge against President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, and Gingrich was having his own affair while he led the impeachment trial against President Clinton.¹³⁰ Until we begin to acknowledge our own sins, model sexual and family health, and take Scripture more seriously, we can hardly expect unbelievers or our own children to take our family values more seriously. A godly example is the most powerful “family values” apologetic.¹³¹

4. We Are “Fighting” in the Wrong Manner

The fact that military language is so commonly used by PFVs toward their “enemies” reveals how far we have strayed from biblical teaching. Worse yet, our tone is often strident and self-righteous instead of humble and gracious.¹³² This is utterly antithetical to the example of Jesus. He was compassionate, gentle, and loving to sinful humans, especially to those who rejected and killed him.¹³³ The Apostle Paul, who had experienced life-threatening persecution, wept over his enemies and felt such pain over their rejection of the truth that he said he wished he could be damned for their sake.¹³⁴ He also said we should be gentle and courteous toward unbelievers since we were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved to various lusts and pleasures (Titus

126 We also often fail to acknowledge the sins of non-evangelical PFVs. For instance, Rush Limbaugh is wildly popular among conservative evangelicals for his attacks on liberals (“family values” opponents) but evangelicals have essentially ignored Limbaugh’s hypocrisy and the damage done to family values by his meanness as well as his three divorces, arrest on prescription drug charges in 2006, and his airport detention in 2006 for having Viagra without a prescription. His response to the latter was to joke that he got the Viagra tablets from the Clinton library and that he “had a great time in the Dominican Republic. Wish I could tell you about it,” Jarrett Murphy, “Rush Limbaugh Detained with Viagra,” CBS News (June 27, 2006), n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/06/27/national/main1753947.shtml>.

127 For instance, an anonymous 1987 *Christianity Today* survey of three hundred pastors found that 23% admitted that while they were in pastoral ministry they had engaged in some form of sexually inappropriate behavior with someone other than their spouse, yet only 4% said their immoral behavior had been discovered, and all were still in pastoral ministry: “How Common is Pastoral Indiscretion” *Leadership* 11 (1988): 12-13.

128 Jonathan Alter, “Is GOP Collapsing Under the Weight of Sleaze?” *Newsweek* (September 10, 2007).

129 Susannah Meadows, “Evangelicals and the Vitter Effect,” *Newsweek Web Exclusive* (July 19, 2007): n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19852389/site/newsweek/page/0>.

130 “Gingrich affair coincided with Lewinsky fight,” *Los Angeles Times* (March 9, 2007): n.p. [cited 21 May 2009]. Online: <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/mar/09/nation/na-gingrich9>. Incredibly, Gingrich said that he had not been a hypocrite in this because unlike Clinton he hadn’t lied under oath. For another dramatic example of hypocrisy among the most powerful evangelical PFVs leaders, see James Carney, “The Rise and Fall of Ralph Reed,” *Time Magazine* (July 23, 2006): n.p. [cited 21 May 2009]. Online: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1218060,00.html>.

131 The God ordained power of Christians’ behavior to transform those hostile to Christian values is found in the results of extensive surveys conducted between 1991 and 2007 of 750 people from thirty different countries who had converted to Christianity from Islam. The leading influence in their decision to follow Christ was “the lifestyle of Christians,” J. Dudley Woodberry, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks, “Why Muslims Follow Jesus,” *Christianity Today* (October 2007): 82.

132 On the dangerous failure of the Religious Right to be civil and gracious, see Os Guinness, *The Case for Civility and Why Our Future Depends on It* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). On gracious Christianity more broadly, see Douglas Jacobson and Rodney J. Sawatsky, *Gracious Christianity: Living the Love We Profess* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

133 Matt 9:36-38; 11:28-30; Luke 7:34-50; 23:34; 1 Pet 2:19-23.

134 Phil 3:18; Rom 9:3. See also Acts 20:19, 31; Rom 12:20; 2 Cor 2:4; 2 Thess 3:15.

3:2-3). Furthermore, when Paul compared himself to others, expressly including homosexuals, he humbly saw himself as the “worst of sinners” redeemed only by the grace of God through Christ (1 Tim 1:10, 15). The Jesus we claim to follow taught us how to respond to our enemies: turn the other cheek when struck, give your possessions when sued, go an extra mile when forced to go one mile, and love (Matt 5:39-44). Unfortunately, much PFVs methodology is fueled by fear of our opponents and how they might harm us, making it virtually impossible to respond to them in a loving manner.¹³⁵ The New Testament tells us we should not fear our opponents. Rather, we should expect and joyfully welcome opposition and suffering as necessary consequences of following Christ and a most powerful means for opponents to experience the life-transforming love of Christ.¹³⁶

Furthermore, effective “family values” ministry does not flow out of our strength, our perfect families, or our use of power. God works most powerfully through weak, common, and fragile believers who lay aside their rights and humbly serve others.¹³⁷ The world uses power, the way of the kingdom is humility, gentleness, and servanthood.¹³⁸ God delights in transforming hard hearted unbelievers and eliminating their sinful practices not through political fights or policy statements but through Spirit-empowered Christians who love sacrificially.¹³⁹ Jesus and the early church are our best examples of this—they did not address the political systems of their day. They did not organize protests or boycotts. Rather, they embraced broken sinners at great cost.¹⁴⁰ Much of the PFVs agenda centers on fighting for Christians’ rights, in spite of the fact that we are to follow the example of Christ who surrendered his rights to serve sinners, loving them in the most costly manner possible.¹⁴¹ This is particularly critical as we minister to the very ones we say we are so concerned about—those having abortions, those struggling with same sex attraction, and promiscuous singles. These are individuals who have often experienced great pain leading to and resulting from these practices. The last thing they need from us is more rejection, harshness, and militaristic rhetoric. Rather, our humble, gentle love coupled with our own example of godly living is what is most powerful in reaching them with the life changing gospel of Christ. This is what will bring about “family values.”

135 For instance, Dobson lists eleven horrible consequences if the homosexual opponents win the battle over the legality of gay marriage. His incredible, fear-inducing list includes: severe strain and perhaps the collapse of our health care and social security systems, loss of religious freedoms, the splintering of families throughout the entire world, and the “severe curtailment” of the gospel, *Marriage under Fire*, 45-64. For an excellent Christian analysis of fear, see Scott Bader-Saye, *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007).

136 Matt 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; Acts 5:40-41; Rom 8:17; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 4:12-19. The power of suffering and persecution to bring the reality and love of God to hardened sinners is seen in numerous passages, including Dan 6:1-27; Acts 7:58-8:1; 8:1-5; 11:19-21; 16:22-34; Phil 1:12-14.

137 Matt 18:1-4; 23:11; 1 Cor 1:26-31; 2 Cor 4:4-12; 12:9-10. On God’s use of flawed families for his redemptive purposes, see David E. Garland and Diana R. Garland, *Flawed Families of the Bible: How God’s Grace Works through Imperfect Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007).

138 Matt 5:5, 39-42; 20:25-27. On the manner in which American Christians have often been seduced by worldly use of power which stands at odds with a kingdom of God ethic, see Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). A non-evangelical treatment of this issue is Chris Hedges, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

139 In their study of 750 Muslims who had converted to Christianity, the researchers found that the love of Christians was one of the most significant factors in Muslim conversions: Woodberry, Shubin, and Marks, “Why Muslims Follow Jesus,” 82-85.

140 This is not to say we should not speak out on political issues but that this should never be the lynch pin of our strategy, cf. Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

141 Phil 2:1-8. The Apostle Paul’s ministry in Philippi is a powerful example of this principle. He laid aside his rights as a Roman citizen and joyfully accepted a beating and imprisonment, which led to the conversion of the jailor and his family. Only after he was freed from jail did he mention his citizenship and assert his legal “rights” (Acts 16:23-39).

V. Conclusion: The Way Forward

I have observed that we are currently losing the culture war for family values due to a misplaced ethical grid, misidentified enemies and families, and a misguided strategy. What would it mean to win? It would mean that we follow the broad teachings of Scripture, not select passages. It would mean that we demonstrate to the world the whole character of God, especially His love, mercy, and justice just as forcefully as his holiness. It would mean that we demonstrate in our actions, priorities, and teachings the heart and passion of God, which is to care for poor and needy families and to champion the cause of the oppressed. Our culture has tragically distorted understandings of families, sexuality, and human life because of distorted views of God--the One who created life and family. This makes living out biblical family values very challenging, but it also creates tremendous opportunities.¹⁴² We most powerfully engage in “family values” ministry when we live out the life of Jesus to those around us broken by sin (their own and others’). Our daughter Abby is involved in some of the most extreme and daunting “family ministry” imaginable in Kampala, Uganda. She lives and ministers in squalid slums to street children made homeless by AIDS, abuse, and poverty. These children are truly the most despised and rejected members of society. Virtually all of them have putrefying sores and infectious diseases worsened by their illegal drug usage and gasoline sniffing. They survive by engaging in immoral and criminal activity. They epitomize the antithesis and destruction of family values. Abby recently wrote the following about her redemptive ministry to create a new family for these children by becoming “God in skin” to them.

It is the most amazing blessing to work with street kids. I often feel sorry for anyone who has never gotten a chance. Yet working with street kids carries a heavy responsibility. You become the one person who doesn’t beat them, who tells them you love them, that Jesus loves them, that they are special. . . . You become for them a picture of what God looks like and that is a heavy responsibility but one that I wouldn’t trade for anything. . . . The other day as we were walking down the streets of the slums I had two street kids on my arms, Joseph on one and Nyanzi on the other. As we were trying to maneuver our way through the slick, grimy, crowded, and narrow passages a small group of people began to insult the boys in English. ‘Don’t touch them! My *** what are you doing? Have you seen their sores? You are going to get a disease from those disgusting kids.’ Yes, I had seen Nyanzis’ sores. I had been treating his sores. . . . Instead of dignifying their insults with a verbal response I removed my hands from the grips of those two precious boys and instead slipped my arms around their shoulders as I hugged them and pulled them close.

As Christians we were made to utterly and completely change the way others see God, especially those stomped on by everyone else. . . . Every evening I put lotion on the boys at our house who want it (which is all of them) and rub their backs. Every time I do this I pray that as I rub their scarred backs, legs, and arms that I am erasing just one of the scars on their hearts created by their physical wounds. . . . The boys have started initiating saying “I love you” to me and calling me mother Babirye instead of auntie. I know that God is answering my prayers.¹⁴³

May God give us the courage to wrap our arms around confused teenage parents, ostracized lesbians, unwed mothers, poor immigrants, shame-filled divorcees, and promiscuous singles in the name of Jesus. Then we will begin to win the “family values” culture war.

142 Sider, *Just Generosity*, 286; David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 20.

143 Abby Tracy, “Street Kids” (September 20, 2008). n.p. [cited 19 November 2008]. Online: <http://africa-love.livejournal.com>. The concept of believers being God to the needy comes from one of the early church fathers, Ep. Diognetus

Dr. Steven R. Tracy is professor of theology and ethics at Phoenix Seminary. He and his wife Celestia are founders of Mending the Soul, an outreach to those who have been abused. He is the author of many books including *Forever and Always* on intimacy, *Marriage at the Crossroads* on marriage and gender roles, and *Mending the Soul* on abuse and healing.

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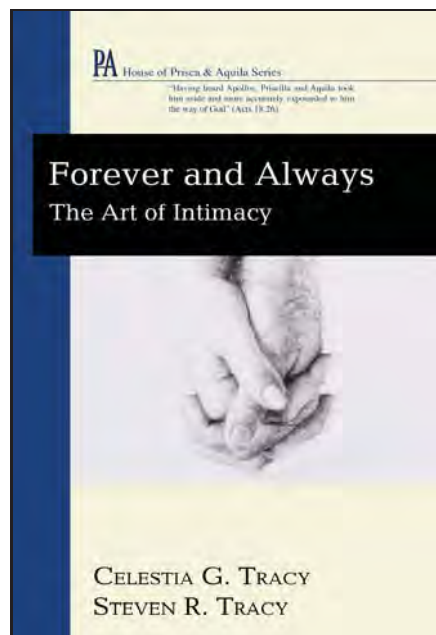
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Review of *One.Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow* by Scot McKnight
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010)
DAEWON MOON

Scot McKnight, professor in Religious Studies at North Park University in Chicago and author of the award-winning bestseller *The Jesus Creed*, has written another profound book on Christian discipleship. His latest book, *One.Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow*, is filled with thought-provoking insights about what it means to follow Jesus as his disciple. Many Christians in the modern world view discipleship as synonymous with personal practices of piety, such as Bible reading, prayer, and evangelism, but McKnight passionately argues, “It’s right, but it ain’t right enough” (14). According to him, at the heart of discipleship is following Jesus, as Jesus himself said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

The author puts forth a simple but significant definition: “A Christian is someone who follows Jesus” (13). Much of the book is devoted to a discussion of how being a Christian and following Jesus apply to various areas of life. Since following Jesus is not merely an intellectual choice, but involves giving one’s whole being over to him, the goal of discipleship should be the transformation of the whole person into the likeness of Christ Jesus through following his way and living his kingdom life in one’s daily life. In each chapter, McKnight builds his arguments based on who Jesus was, what Jesus said, and what Jesus did in the Gospels. First and foremost, McKnight says, Jesus awakened people’s dreams by proclaiming, “The kingdom of God has come near” (Mark 1:15). For Jesus, the *kingdom* meant God’s dream for this world—that is, not just God’s personal rule in the heart of the individual, but also God’s “Dream Society” on earth. He wants to offers to us a *kingdom dream* that can transform our core being. The *kingdom* is characterized by love, justice, peace, and wisdom. *Kingdom-minded* followers are called to be seriously committed, even to give their whole life, and to be closely connected to the community of the church. The realities of this kingdom are to be shown in the current world as well as in the age to come.

Although the chapter about eternity and hell might be somewhat controversial because of the author’s obscure attitude (perhaps slightly leaning toward evangelical universalism), the chapters about peace and sex are outstanding; they are strikingly candid and profoundly reasoned from a biblical perspective. In particular, I am very impressed by the author’s view that “peace is a result and not a goal; peace is a result of love, so love is our goal” (73). “Instead of loving love, romance or intimacy,” McKnight writes, “the kingdom lover loves the other and lives his or her life for that other” (140). Most chapters of the book are framed in the language of love, which reminds readers of the fact that Jesus was the beloved one of the Father, and he loved the Father even to obey to take up the cross for the world. This relationship of love explains perfectly how Jesus was able to live the kingdom life on earth, and his followers are called to have this relationship with him.

Jason Mandryk, author of *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, once emphasized that one of the biggest challenges on the mission field is the lack of discipleship among national Christians; many of them are talking the talk, but not walking the walk. I believe that the same would hold for many churches in North America. In this regard, McKnight’s book is an invaluable wake-up call to the many nominal and slumbering Christians throughout the world. Along with profound biblical and theological reflections on discipleship, each chapter of *One.Life* addresses a number of real life issues and stories, which help readers grasp vividly how biblical truth should (or should not) apply to our everyday life. For this reason, I highly recommend this book to everyone, especially to young adults, who want to know what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus after accepting him as one’s own Savior and Lord.

Daewon Moon is a Th.D. student in the joint missiology program with Boston University and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He received his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA. Daewon and his wife Jeong Hwa have traveled extensively and been involved in various international missions ministries in Asia, Africa, and Europe with Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

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The Cat & the Toaster

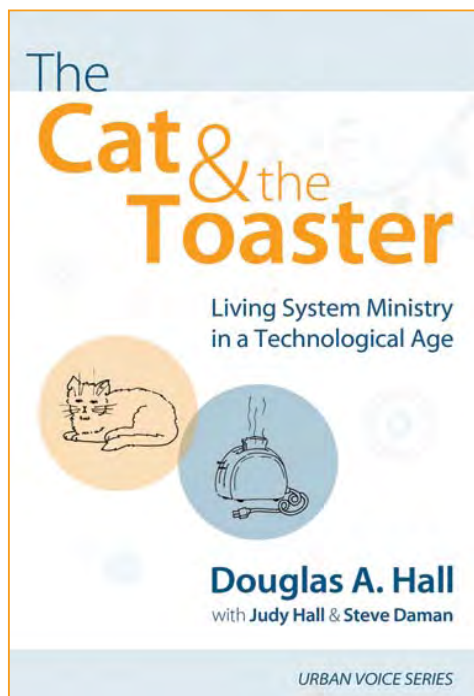
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Douglas A. Hall with Judy Hall & Steve Daman

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Douglas A. Hall is the President of the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston (www.egc.org), where he has served with his wife, Judy Hall, since 1964. He is also an adjunct professor of urban ministry with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

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**Review of *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical
Theology*, 2nd ed. by Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy
(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009)**

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Gregory A. Boyd is that rare combination of pastor scholar who seems able to balance both callings. As a pastor, he is reportedly well loved by his people – as a scholar he is prolific and controversial. An Arminian in persuasion, Boyd finds the Reformed camp applauding his work on refuting oneness theology while deploring his openness theology stance, though recognizing him as the most biblical and conservative of the prominent initiators of the openness camp. Paul Rhodes Eddy, also a well known evangelical scholar, has been a long term professor of biblical and theological studies at Bethel University (St. Paul, Minnesota), who is known for solid scholarship, but does not mind an occasional foray into controversy, as evidenced by his teaming up with Boyd to answer theological liberals and agnostics in their popular book, *The Jesus Legend*, with which they weigh in on the canonical versus non-canonical gospels debate.

Across the Spectrum is a new edition of a similarly popular introductory text, originally published in 2002, and used not only at Bethel, but in many Christian colleges to introduce students to various issues in evangelical theology, both historic and current. While the revision covers much of the same ground as the original edition, a number of notable adaptations of language are evident from the table of contents on. For example, the first edition opened with a chapter called “The Inspiration Debate.” Now the second edition calls that same chapter “The Inerrancy Debate.” Its opening paragraph, a story about a college student, at “a state university” (15), attempting to explain why the Gospel of John is different from the synoptics, has also experienced a set of name changes – Shawna, the Christian sophomore physics major of the first edition, has morphed into Rachel, a sophomore social work major, in the second edition, while her roommate, Wendy, has now become Molly, though retaining her major in history. The surrounding text of the account, however, is exactly the same, even to its single word in bold type (indicating its presence in the glossary at the end of the book): faith. In some sense, this example may serve as a synecdoche of the book itself, it presents basically the same content as does the first edition, updating or clarifying various wordings. For example, “yet evangelicals disagree over precisely how to express this conviction about the inspiration and authority of the Bible” (1st ed.: 10) has now become “at the same time, there is some disagreement among evangelicals concerning the question of factual errors in parts of the Bible that touch on things other than Christian faith and practice” (2nd ed.: 16). In other words, statements that were more indirect, like the designer names of the students “Shawna” and “Wendy,” have now become direct and more biblically oriented like the biblical “Rachel” and the historic “Molly,” of Molly Pitcher fame. “Inspiration” has focused on “inerrancy.” The content of successive chapters reveals this revision strategy. For example, in “The Foreknowledge Debate,” a topic in which Boyd is well versed and upon which he has written and spoken extensively, the more universal opening example, “Is global warming eventually going to raise the ocean levels, burying cities along the coasts?” (1st ed: 37) has now particularized to “Does God already know *if* you’re going to marry and, if so, *who* your spouse will be?” (2nd ed.: 47). Updating includes new books being added to chapters’ bibliographies, though the text of a chapter might remain basically the same, and often is word for word. Other aspects undergo a more extensive revision. One helpful improvement is an appendix of thirteen short debates on a number of topics, previously placed on-line rather than being included in the first edition, but now included in the second. This alone is reason for those who enjoyed and employed the first edition to replace it with this expanded

volume. One philosophical chapter, “The Human Constitution,” has been abbreviated and turned into “Issue 4” (298) of the appendix. The resulting size of the second edition is 64 pages longer: 351 pages versus 287 in the first edition. Only a few of these pages are employed in such uses as prolegomena (the text begins on page 9 in the 1st edition and page 15 in the 2nd), the entire size of the second edition being 43 pages longer than that of the 1st edition, despite the excised chapter.

The major question one asks, of course, when going into a two-author volume which claims to present both sides of key issues is: Is the presentation of the side I favor fair? Is this book slanted in its discussions? Perusing the various presentations on the debates on inerrancy, providence, foreknowledge, creation/evolution, divine image, Christology, atonement, salvation, sanctification, eternal security, destiny of the unevangelized, baptism, Lord’s supper (these two issues are reversed in place since the first edition), the gifts, women’s ministry, eschatology, eternal punishment, I conclude, yes, the essays are fair to both sides. I do notice some placements are peculiar. For example, the foreknowledge debate (which now has three rather than two sides to it) has the classic Arminian position first, the Calvinist second, and the Arminian open view (which Boyd favors) last. Why the Arminian positions are not grouped and why the Calvinist is sandwiched between them, which in a debating structure is the weakest position to hold, is noteworthy. Concurrently, I notice that any debate that has an Arminian position seems always to have that one featured last, which is the stronger position. This makes one wonder at the choice of placement for each of the second positions presented for each debate, the position with which one is left. One could argue that, for example, the presentation is historical, Calvin having antedated Arminius, but the roots of both theologies precede each of these authors and extend back to the early church. At the same time, Professors Boyd and Eddy have recruited four other respected scholars to supplement some of the sections or critique their work and, in this way, they have sought to insure their presentations will be more fairly presented.

As for helps, although there is a computer generated type Bible index, still missing is a subject index. While the book is well structured and its table of contents and in-text sections are reader friendly, the absence of a well sub-sectioned subject index is always a nuisance when one wants to move around any large volume. I would recommend such a carefully constructed (not computer generated) subject index be added to the third edition. There is also the same helpful introductory glossary, but no page references where its terms appear, and those should be added as well. There is also a miniscule set of endnotes, presumably not to frighten off texting-level college students. Content-wise, I was disappointed to see that chapters have still not been added on “The New Perspective Debate” or “Role Equality or Subordination in the Trinity,” both current controversies which were also missing in the original edition. Hopefully, in the next edition chapters on each topic will be added as well.

But, these complaints are really requests for more. *Across the Spectrum* is a solid introduction, made even more specific to the visceral world of the college student, basically emerging from the me-orientation of adolescence to the more adult consciousness of the maturing and ready to learn how to embrace the other “mes” in the world around us. In this revision, Boyd and Eddy attempt to bridge more closely to the current self-focused state of the young collegian, than by simply delving into the bigger global picture. In that sense, one can see their years of teaching at this level and the wisdom that the regular interrogation “Will this be on the test?” evokes. For the Christian college student, two texts are always necessary – the world’s booklist of concerns and books about God and faith. *Across the Spectrum* seeks to address the second list, especially as the first strays over into it. The Bible is always being toted out in secular and even sometimes in quasi-religious college “Bible as Literature” lectures comprised of what is often little more than warmed over and outdated higher critical appraisals of the great seminal “legends” of this epic piece of world-orienting literature. Boyd and Eddy are not only addressing that phenomenon on secular campuses, but attempting something more for sacred campuses as well, attempting to orient college

students into the scholarly debates that mark the progress of evangelicalism in such arenas as The Evangelical Theological Society and The Institute of Biblical Research, the fraternities of scholars of a more historically orthodox biblical orientation.

In its largest sense, as an introductory volume, *Across the Spectrum* is replete with information and very provocative. It is one-stop shopping for a quick and responsible take on a variety of theological topics. Beyond its usefulness as a college text, it is also helpful for pastors who want to stay brushed up on most of the current academic issues in evangelicalism, but do not have time to sit down with a stack of books and explore them. Books going into second editions usually signify that the first edition was helpful and the market will bear more. This is the case of *Across the Spectrum*. In its second edition, it has sought to be an even more useful text to lay out the issues fairly and with helpful references for those who want to delve further into any of its given topics.

William David Spencer is Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts, teaching at Gordon-Conwell's Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). He edits *Priscilla Papers* (of Christians for Biblical Equality), co-edits *Africanus Journal* (which originates out of CUME) and the House of Prisca and Aquila Series for Wipf and Stock, Publishers. He has an extensive background in urban ministry and is also a founder and volunteer pastor of Pilgrim Church (PC[USA] and CCCC) in Beverly, MA. He is the author of eleven books and @200 articles, reviews, stories, poems, has won a variety of writing awards, and is listed (among other places) in *Contemporary Authors (New Revision Series)*. His most recent books are *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men serving together in the Church* (Wipf and Stock's House of Prisca and Aquila Series; 2008); *Marriage at the Crossroads: Couples in Conversation about Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decision Making and Intimacy* (IVP; 2009); and the new reissue of his ground-breaking analysis of views of Jesus in Rastafari: *Dread Jesus* (Wipf and Stock; 2011).

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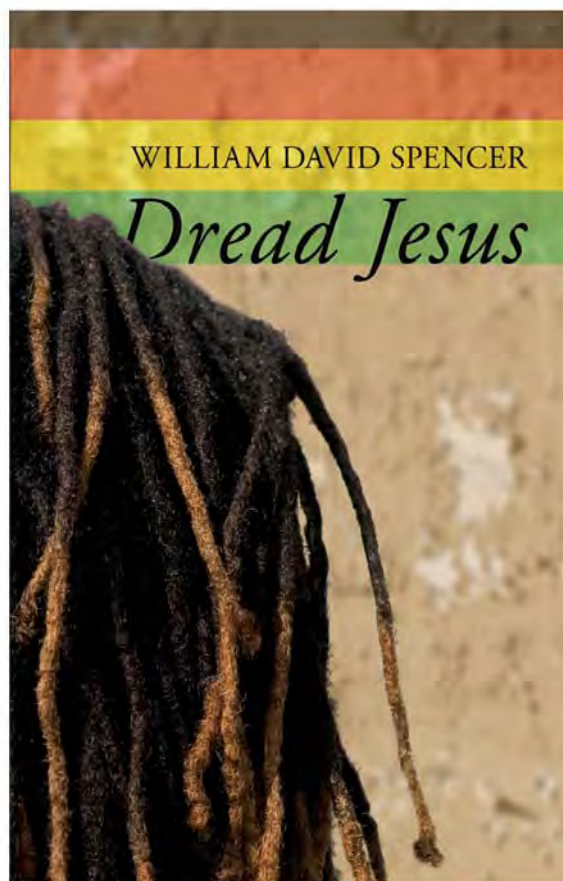
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Bob Marley has become an icon among youth across the world. T-shirts with his picture, reggae music sung by him and many others from Jamaica and other nations, hair of all colors in dreadlocks together proclaim a message that signifies personal freedom and global liberation. But behind these symbols is a profound Afro-Caribbean identity movement and a faith that few understand.

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WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER is an editor of the best-selling textbook on the Rastafarian movement *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, which is universally recognized as the definitive multiauthor work in the field. He has taught in Jamaica and has authored or edited ten other books on global and religious themes. He is Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston/Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME).



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Review of *Sunday, Sabbath and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture* by eds. Edward O’Flaherty, Rodney L. Petersen with Timothy A. Norton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010)

GRACE YING MAY

This collection of voices on the Sabbath would appeal to a thoughtful and educated Christian audience, including pastors, teachers and church leaders. Scholarship is not shortchanged in the desire to encourage post-modern readers to develop a healthy and godly rhythm of work and rest. While the book is divided into three parts: relational presence, spiritual coherence and social integrity, the essays can easily stand alone, so one does not have to read it all in one setting.

The book opens with, perhaps, its finest and strongest chapter, in which Gloria White-Hammond delivers a poignant and compelling testimony of our need for divine and human presence. She cites the casualties of children growing up home alone to the collective pain we experience as a 24/7 society spinning off its axis as the cost of not stopping regularly to allow the Lord to restore us. What vies for our time? Rodney Petersen points to cell phones and all the electronic wizardry which permit urbanization, industrialization and globalization to invade not only our work-a-day lives but even our time off. But as Marva Dawn contends, “Sabbath keeping” (31) can act as an amazing counterforce. Immersing ourselves in the Word of God and experiencing *shalom* can defend our soul from enemies ranging from information glut to broken commitments. Moreover, working out of the joy that rest brings honors and follows the pattern of our Creator. Dennis Olson sees Sabbath as a way that God hallows time and people, just as ceasing from work every Sabbath reminded Israel that her holiness did not depend on her frantic efforts but on the God who sanctifies. From their unique Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant perspectives, Alkiviadis Calivas, Edward O’ Flaherty and Horace Allen, respectively, envision the Sabbath as fulfilling and liberating and a celebration of worship that gathers people together in the spirit of the Resurrection. Darrell Guder returns us to the ancient church when every mass gave God’s people an occasion to be equipped and thrust back into mission. Alexis McCrossen argues that individualism and commercialized sports have led to a national outcry in America for a better way to spend a Sunday that is refreshing for her citizens. In the same vein, Thomas Massaro asserts that the Sabbath is a “moral obligation” (136) that exalts God by relativizing work and consumerism. Ruy Costa posits the Sabbath as an alternative way of living that defies the work ethic imposed by slavery in Egypt and asserts the freedom of all people from all classes to enjoy their Creator. Aida Spencer offers biblical principles to help us to get at the heart of the Sabbath and avoid the dangers of legalism. Donald Conroy recalls the Sabbath as a “sign of the covenant” (169) which infuses a day with sacred meaning as we learn to worship as families and households of faith in ways that are respectful of the environment and of our own beings. Finally, Louis Mitchell, leaning heavily upon Jonathan Edwards, helps us to appreciate the value of the Sabbath both as a gift to be cherished and a visible and public means of showing reverence to God.

Taken together these fourteen chapters seek to be ecumenical and embracing of different Christian traditions while also providing genuine points of contact with our secular and pluralistic society, for the appeal of Sabbath is intrinsic to all of God’s creation – a case that the book makes exceedingly well. While not all the authors were evangelical, they reflected an orthodox view of the faith and spoke from a variety of ethnicities, cultures and disciplines. The book’s strength, however, is also its weakness: there are so many different authors and the chapters are relatively short so that the reader is left feeling that he or she is only hearing snippets of a much longer and sustained conversation. But, given our busy and hectic lives, brief exposure to many perspectives is probably the best way to tap into the richness of such a broad topic as the Sabbath.

I would heartily recommend *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend* to anyone who desires to savor

the Sabbath in a deeper way. Refreshing and stimulating, this volume is worthy of a place in a pastor's study, any seminary library and the GCTS Book Centre.

Rev. Dr. Grace Ying May (GCTS M. Div. '91, Boston University School of Theology, Th. D. 2000) is currently teaching at City Seminary in New York City and has taught courses in Missiology, Women in Ministry and the Chinese Church. She has taught at Gordon-Conwell's S. Hamilton and Boston Campuses (CUME), New York Theological Seminary, and most recently at Gordon-Conwell's Hispanic Ministry Program in New York City. As an ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church (USA), she has pastored in churches in the Boston and New York City's Chinatown. A second-generation Chinese-American, she has also contributed to *The Global God, Growing Healthy Asian American Churches* and *Seeking Harmony: Intergenerational Theology of the Household of God* (forthcoming summer 2012). Her greatest passion is seeing women empowered for ministry. She relishes urban settings, different cuisines and traveling because it allows her to meet God and the body of Christ in new ways.

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A Devotional Bible Study for Women
on Finding Healing and Wholeness
in God's Love

Leslie Ann McKinney

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A Devotional Bible Study for Women on
Finding Healing and Wholeness in God's Love



LESLE ANN
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Leslie Ann McKinney serves as Pastor of Community at Pilgrim Church of Beverly, Massachusetts, a union church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. She specializes in women's ministry and is a spiritual director. She is a board member of Life Together International, a nonprofit ministry encouraging biblical justice, unity, and reconciliation.

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**Review of *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament
Commentary by Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010)**

JAMES P. SWEENEY

Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner have contributed a noteworthy entry to the well-regarded Pillar New Testament Commentary series. D. A. Carson, the series editor, describes the objective of the Pillar series as seeking “above all to make clear the text of Scripture as we have it” (xiv). Both authors are well-known for their previous contributions to New Testament scholarship (see xxviii and xlvii–xlviii of the present volume under review for bibliographic examples). Their specializations encompass Paul and his letters, Paul’s use of the Old Testament, and New Testament ethics. Ciampa is Professor of New Testament and Chair of the Division of Biblical Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA. Rosner is Senior Lecturer in New Testament and Ethics at Moore Theological College and Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Ancient History at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia.

Ciampa and Rosner’s commentary on 1 Corinthians follows the general format exemplified by other volumes in the Pillar series. The volume opens with a series preface by the editor, the authors’ preface, a list of chief abbreviations, and a select bibliography, the latter of which includes both commentaries (xxii–xxiv) and other works (xxiv–liv). Following these preliminary matters is a fifty-two page introduction that surveys a wide range of issues related to Corinth, Paul, and 1 Corinthians. Eight hundred and fifteen pages of commentary on 1 Corinthians ensue. Appended to the commentary are four indices: subjects, authors, Scripture references, and extra-biblical literature.

The introduction is structured in three disproportionate segments: I. The Church in Corinth (2–6), II. The Identity and Aims of the Apostle Paul (7–18), and III. The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians (19–52). Regarding the church in Corinth, Ciampa and Rosner join a growing consensus that views the problems there as owing to the infiltration of the dominant Roman/Corinthian culture and values into the church. With regard to Paul’s aim (sec. II), the authors suggest it is “to bring about true worship and obedience among the Gentiles, to the glory of God ...” (17).

In section III, the longest portion of the introduction, the authors address a wide range of matters, including the structure and argument of 1 Corinthians, its biblical-theological framework, recent research, and some distinctive features of their commentary. In contrast to the common application of the rules of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical speech to the analysis of 1 Corinthians (e.g., M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993]), Ciampa and Rosner favor an approach that takes Old Testament and Jewish frames of reference as the primary lens that clarifies its form and content (20). Building on their previous research (cf. *NTS* 52 [2006]: 205–18), they outline Paul’s overarching argument in six sections (24): I. Letter Opening (1:1–9), II. True and False Wisdom and Corinthian Factionalism (1:10–4:17), III. “Flee Sexual Immorality” and “Glorify God with Your Bodies” (4:18–7:40), IV. “Flee Idolatry” and “Glorify God” in Your Worship (8:1–14:40), V. The Resurrection and Consummation (15:1–58), and VI. Letter Closing (16:1–24). As sections II–V of this outline indicate, the authors identify four elements in Paul’s argument: wisdom, sexuality, worship, and resurrection/consummation (25), elements that are reflected elsewhere in other Pauline letters (26–27). They further enumerate four theological themes that drive Paul’s instruction throughout 1 Corinthians and provide it with its essential unity: the lordship of Christ, worldwide worship, the eschatological temple, and the glory of God (32–33). Yet the authors are not simply concerned about the original historical and literary contexts of 1 Corinthians. They are also conscious of its ongoing value for the contemporary cultural challenges facing Christians: “Paul’s application of the gospel message to the problem

of the Corinthian church provides us with considerable assets for appropriating the resources and responding to the challenges of post modern perspectives and challenges” (51). Rather than reading 1 Corinthians more narrowly as Paul’s response to oral and written reports regarding the problems addressed, moreover, they favor a biblical/Jewish approach to the letter. They view it as Paul’s “*attempt to tell the church of God that they are part of the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation of worldwide worship of the God of Israel, and as God’s eschatological temple they must act in a manner appropriate to their pure and holy status by becoming unified, shunning pagan vices, and glorifying God in obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ*” (52; their italics).

The quality and detail exemplified in the introduction also characterizes the commentary itself. Given the detailed nature of the authors’ analysis, the following representative samples are an attempt to provide readers with a feel for the commentary’s contents. The authors understand the factionalism referenced in 1:12 to be based on social stratification or class (81). Regarding 1:30, they maintain that “righteousness, holiness and redemption” explicate God’s wisdom, which is now redefined through the cross as a virtual synonym for salvation (109). Regarding the tricky closing clause of 2:13b (*pneumatikois pneumatika synkrinontes*), the authors prefer the rendering adopted by the NRSV: “interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual” (*pace* the TNIV’s “explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words”). Ciampa and Rosner note that 3:14–15 is not a statement related to salvation, but a reference to eschatological “prize,” the essence of which is “praise from God” (4:5) (157). Paul’s directives relative to the case of incest in 1 Corinthians 5 (196–221) highlight the high demand placed on the church as God’s temple (cf. 3:16–17) to protect its standing before God and the world. It also challenges contemporary believers to build churches that foster both support and accountability (221). The apostle’s admonitions against temple prostitution (6:12–17) and sexual immorality (6:18–20) similarly underline the glory of God as the ultimate purpose of God’s temple, which means that God’s people are to honor God with their bodies (266). With N. T. Wright, the authors see Paul’s comments in 8:4–6 as a reaffirmation of a strict Jewish monotheism anchored in Deuteronomy 6:4. At the same time, however, “Christ finds his identity within the very definition of that one God / Lord of Israel” (383). Unlike many commentators, Ciampa and Rosner prefer to take 9:24–27 with what follows (10:1–11:1), rather than as a literary summary of 9:1–23 (433–34). With respect to the controversial debate over the meaning and implications of *kephalē* (TNIV: “head”) in 11:3 (506–11), the authors offer a nuanced discussion. On the one hand, “Paul seems to be affirming that the creation pattern is still significant and cannot be shrugged off” (510). On the other hand, “Paul’s commitment to fully integrating women and their gifts in the life of the church is clear” (511 n. 27). The authors’ comments regarding 13:8–10 indicate that they are not cessationists along the lines of B. B. Warfield (i.e., those who maintain that the *charismata* ceased with the apostles, expressed classically in Warfield’s *Counterfeit Miracles* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1918], and republished as *Miracles* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954]). The authors note that the middle voice in 13:8 (“tongues *will cease*” [*pausontai*]) does not suggest that tongues would stop or come to an end at any point other than at the final consummation (655). They understand the related “completeness” (13:10, the TNIV’s rendering of *to teleion*) as a reference to “the fullness of the new creation in the presence of the Lord himself” (657). Ciampa and Rosner’s treatment of 1 Corinthians 15 is lengthy and detailed (736–839). They note that the most difficult exegetical problem of the chapter is the reference to the “baptism for the dead” in 15:29 (739). They paraphrase Paul’s meaning as follows: “‘Now, if there is no resurrection, what will be accomplished by those who get baptized because of what they have heard about how our dead will be raised? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people undergoing baptism on account of them?’” (784–85). They view the content of the entire chapter as a call to faithful Christian service in the assurance that comes from the resurrection, namely, that “sacrifices made for Christ and his kingdom are not made in vain, but will be richly rewarded in the fullness of that kingdom” (839). The authors’ concluding comments relative to

16:24 encapsulate the priority Paul expresses throughout the entirety of 1 Corinthians: “his concern is, as theirs should be, with the edification of the whole church, for the glory of God” (867).

As with any work of this length and complexity, there are occasional editorial incongruities. These include a wrong reference on 244 (2 Cor 12:14 should be 2 Cor 13:14), punctuation on 437 (“run” on 437 should be ‘run,’ where it is enclosed within a citation), and a lack of concord between the English and Greek on 438 n. 25 (where the translation of Chrysostom’s comments does not completely match the Greek they cite). One might also like to have seen some interaction with Barth Campbell on the meaning of flesh and spirit in 1 Corinthians 5:5 (*JETS* 36.3 [1993]: 331–42) and with Chrys Caragounis’s different take on 1 Corinthians 7:1 (*The Corinthian Correspondence* [ed. R. Bieringer; BETL 125; Leuven: Peeters, 1996], 543–59, and *ETL* 82.1 [2006]: 187–97). It is not clear to the present reviewer whether the authors had the option of providing their own translation for this commentary. If not, it is perhaps unfortunate that they chose to employ the TNIV, which Zondervan has recently decided to discontinue (along with the original NIV) following the publication of the 2011 revision of the NIV (see <http://www.niv-cbt.org/> for details).

These comments aside, however, and as the previous summary of the introduction and content of the commentary attempts to make clear, Ciampa and Rosner’s work is a welcome contribution to understanding the meaning of 1 Corinthians against its historical and literary contexts. Its additional value is that they do not confine their treatment to those contexts alone, but suggest lines of contemporary application as well. It would serve well as a base text for a seminary or graduate course on 1 Corinthians and for preparation with a view to expository preaching. Their commentary is not as comprehensive as the more technical commentaries of Anthony C. Thiselton’s *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) and Eckhard Schnabel’s *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (Historisch Theologische Auslegung; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2006). But it is considerably more accessible to English readers. It takes an important place alongside the solid expositional work of David E. Garland’s *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) as a quality English resource for understanding and applying the text of 1 Corinthians. For those who do not already own Garland, it should be noted, Ciampa and Rosner’s text is comparably priced (Garland’s *1 Corinthians* retails for \$54.99, while amazon.com offers it for \$38.49, with free shipping; Ciampa and Rosner’s commentary retails for \$65.00, and amazon.com’s price is \$40.95, with free shipping). Comparatively speaking, Ciampa and Rosner’s commentary is more up-to-date, interacts with a broader range of secondary literature, and provides a fuller introduction than Garland’s.

James P. Sweeney, Ph.D., is an alumnus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.A. in New Testament, 1993). Before assuming a professorship in New Testament at Winebrenner Theological Seminary, 950 N. Main St., Findlay, OH, in the fall of 2010, he engaged in pastoral ministry in Massachusetts for fourteen years (1992–1994, 1998–2010) before and after doctoral studies. From the spring of 2000 to the summer of 2010, he taught approximately fifty courses as an adjunct in Greek, as well as a wide range of New Testament subjects at three of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s campuses: Boston (CUME), South Hamilton, and Charlotte, NC.

Review of *King James Onlyism: A New Sect* by James D. Price
(Singapore: James D. Price/Saik Wah Press, PTE. LTD 2006)
DARIN VINCENT POUILLARD

King James Onlyism: A New Sect, at 658 pages of text, including 205 pages of Appendices, a 9 page bibliography, and a 14 page index of topics, was written by James D. Price in response to what the author regards as “radical King James Onlyism” (18), which he postulates is comprised of two views. In regards to the first view, Price writes,

Some Christians use only the King James Version...because it was translated from a particular form of the *Textus Receptus*—the Hebrew and Greek words behind the English words of the King James Version. This is based on their belief that the translators of the King James Version, when they had to choose between differing readings in the Hebrew and Greek texts available to them, made excellent textual decisions unequaled today—that is, the translators always chose the correct reading. This view holds that these texts are the providentially preserved authoritative texts of Scripture. Further, they believe the King James Version is an accurate translation made by men of great piety and scholarship. To them King James English is superior to Modern English, being able to more accurately express the truth of the original languages. They deny that the King James Version needs to be revised, updated, or in any way altered. Some, but not all who hold this view, assert that the use of the King James Version should be made a test of fellowship (16).

The second view of radical King James Onlyism is in regard to the preservation of God’s Word. Some Christians, according to Price, do not believe that God has preserved His Word by means of manuscript copies of the Hebrew and Greek texts, but, rather, by means of translations: “Because the original Hebrew and Greek autographs have perished, and only imperfect manuscript copies have survived, they reason that the original Hebrew and Greek words are not available to make up a flawless, infallible, inerrant, authoritative Bible.” Since the Apostles, when quoting the Old Testament, used a Greek translation of the Old Testament, “they conclude that God preserves His word through providentially guided translations” (17). However, not every translation preserves God’s infallible and inerrant Word. Only those translations which were made when the international language changed are considered to be infallible and inerrant: “When Latin became the international language of the Roman Empire, God providentially guided a translation of the Bible into Old Latin; and that translation became the inspired, infallible, inerrant Bible” (18). Subsequent Latin translations were corrupt, heretical copies, just as subsequent copies of the Greek autographs are imperfect:

Finally, in these last days, English has become the international language, consequently providentially guided a translation of the Bible into English is the King James Version of 1611. Today this Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God preserved for the English-speaking world. Modern versions are corrupt, heretical perversions that contaminate the Church and lead to further doctrinal error. They are the result of the subversive work of Satan. Anyone who uses any version except the King James Version is a heretic and an instrument of the Devil (18).

Price, a former Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Temple Baptist Seminary in Chattanooga, Tennessee, from 1972 to 2005, and Academic Dean from 2000 to 2005, wrote *King James Onlyism: A New Sect* to counteract “this new erroneous doctrine” (18). The intended audience is the non-technical pastor and layperson (19). The author’s desire is that, through the information provided, readers will reach a balanced view of the subject, “one that will avoid extremes and unnecessary division” (19).

In his introduction, Price provides the reader with a description of the book's organization:

The first four chapters trace the history of English versions of the Bible from the earliest attempts of translation to the completion of the Authorized or King James Version of 1611. After discussing the history of the English Bible up to the time of William Tyndale (1494-1536), subsequent translations are shown to be revisions of Tyndale's translation, each with its own purpose and objectives, including the King James Version (19).

In chapter five, Price describes subsequent revisions to the King James Version and in chapter six he highlights many of the differences which exist in current editions of the King James Version. Among these differences are discrepancies in grammar, in capitalization, in pronouns, in indefinite articles, in spelling, and in the use of obsolete words. Students of Greek and Hebrew will appreciate the five chapters Price uses to discuss the various proposed theories on how God has preserved the autographic texts in many imperfect copies of the Bible (128). He discusses both the various Hebrew (i.e., Alexandrian, Palestinian, Babylonian, Masoretic) and Greek text traditions (i.e., Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, Byzantine). He helps readers to understand that, as a result of an urgency to distribute copies of the autographic texts in the early decades of Christianity, variations resulted in those copies (139). The early Christian community was then presented with a new challenge: the challenge of determining which copies most accurately convey the autographic text. The reader soon learns about the various types of manuscripts which exist; papyri, uncials, and minuscules and the tedious work of examining each copy to construct a relatively reliable restoration of the autographic text.

"Chapters eight through thirteen discuss the various theories scholars have proposed for deciding original words in the places where the words of the ancient Bibles differ" (20). Among the methods discussed are that of Westcott and Hort, the eclectic method, Majority Text method, the Traditional Text method (*Textus Receptus*), and others. King James Only advocates, who contend that the King James Version (KJV) is perfect, will be educated on the many changes that the KJV has undergone to correct errors in translation, to replace obsolete words with current English, and in some cases to make unjustifiable departures from the most reliable Hebrew and Greek texts.

Chapters fourteen and fifteen are insightful chapters for pastors, students, and lay members. In these chapters, Price describes the most prominent modern versions. He then compares eight English versions, along with the King James Version of 1769, for their teachings on evangelical and fundamental theology of the Christian faith: 1) the deity of Christ, 2) the virgin birth of Christ, 3) atonement by the blood of Christ, 4) justification by faith, 5) the bodily resurrection of Christ, 6) the second coming of Christ, and 7) the doctrine of salvation. He proves that all of these translations teach the essential evangelical and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Readers will appreciate the many texts cited by the author in this study. The charts and graphs summarizing his findings are extremely helpful. In these chapters, Price arrests the fear of King James Only advocates who are concerned that modern English versions support doctrinal error and heretical views (313, 315). In chapter sixteen, the author addresses how one might deal with textual ambiguities and in chapter seventeen makes the point that the King James Version is not a flawless, perfect, free from uncertainty translation. Neither is any other translation. In fact, he argues,

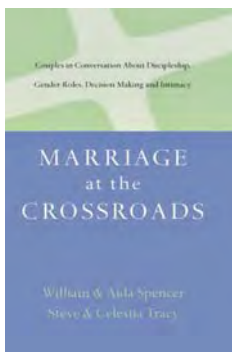
Biblical faith accepts as true what God has done in history. He sent His Son to be our substitutionary sacrifice, raising Him from the dead as proof of the sufficiency of the atonement. He substantiated the historicity of the deed by reliable witnesses and tangible evidence. He preserved His Word in hundreds of ancient Bibles, witnesses to the text of Scripture. Truth is to be established by at least two or three reliable witnesses: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2

Corinthians 13:1). God has preserved hundreds of witnesses to the text of His Word; they just need to be cross-examined. It is time to stop dogmatism, and go back to the historical doctrine of the Biblical text-appealing to the Hebrew and Greek texts as final authority and cross-examining the witnesses in places of uncertainty (419-420).

His position is that people should be able to choose the King James Version or any other modern translation, for “they are not enemies of the Kingdom of God, nor tools of Satan” (421). They are vehicles of God’s Word, delivering the message of redemption to the people of each generation in a language the people can comprehend (421). In this work, Price never condemns the King James Version or minimizes the rich value of it. The King James Version, along with other translations, contains the essential and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: Each version has its strengths and weaknesses. Taken together, they complement one another, helping a Bible student who compares them learn how one Hebrew or Greek word may be translated in a number of ways.

While the intended audience of *King James Onlyism* is pastors and laity, many who have not had any training in textual criticism may find portions of this work to be too technical. However, seminary students and pastors will greatly benefit from *King James Onlyism*. It can serve as a valuable resource for helping the local church understand how English translations have come into existence. I would recommend this book to pastors, lay members, students, and in particular to professors of Greek and Hebrew as a required reading for their students.

Darin Vincent Poullard has served as Senior Pastor of the Fort Washington Baptist Church, in Fort Washington, Maryland, since 2002. He earned an M.R.E and an M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME) and co-authored chapters in two recent books, *Global Voices on Biblical Equality* and *Marriage at the Crossroads*.



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The editors of this volume are Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad.

Other contributors include John Runyon (Associate Director for Enrollment Management and adjunct professor), CUME graduates Darin Vincent Poullard and Eliana Marques Runyon, and GCTS Hamilton graduates Matthew D. Kim, Sandra Gatlin Whitley, Awilda Gonzalez-Tejera, Beulah Wood, and others.

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Review of *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* by Peter Mallen (London: T and T Clark, 2008)¹

CHRISTOPHER D. WILLIAMS

Countless monographs have been written on Luke's use and interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The results of these investigations have produced a plethora of opinions on how Luke uses scripture and for what purpose. Peter Mallen joins this discussion in his book *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*. Mallen's book is a revised and updated version of his doctoral dissertation which he submitted to the London School of Theology in 2006. He has served as a lecturer in biblical studies and theology at Tabor College in Melbourne, Australia. At the time of publication, he served as the Director of Discipleship Education at the Uniting Church Centre for Theology and Ministry in Melbourne, Australia.

In the introduction, Mallen asserts that he aims to offer "a full-length investigation of Luke's use of Isaiah through the entire narrative of Luke-Acts" (19). Thus, his goal is to portray the distinct reading and usage (transformation) of Isaiah by Luke.

In order to accomplish this aim, Mallen first surveys the usage of Isaiah in late Second Temple Judaism. He does this by looking at the usage of Isaiah in the two translations that were popular during this time: the Septuagint and the Targums. In this treatment, he highlights the interpretive traditions that influenced the way certain passages of Isaiah were read and translated. Second, he traces the understanding of five distinct Isaianic themes in certain late Second Temple texts. Mallen concludes, "The typical use of Isaiah within STJ is to encourage hope in the future restoration of the righteous within Israel, while pointing to judgment for all others" (52). Such emphasis gave rise to many nationalistic interpretations of key Isaianic texts. With his investigation, Mallen hopes to illustrate the similarities and differences between Luke and his Jewish contemporaries' use of Isaiah.

In his treatment of Luke-Acts, Mallen highlights four Isaianic texts that Luke has used to shape his narrative: Isaiah 40; 49:6; 53; 61:1, 2. He identifies these texts by observing quotations or discerning allusions at key junctures in Luke's narrative. These key passages are: the birth narratives (Lk 1, 2), the ministry of John the Baptist (Lk 3), Jesus' rejection in Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30), the commissioning of the disciples (Lk 24:44-53; Acts 1:1-11), the mission of Paul and his defense speeches (Acts 13:13-43; 26:2-23), the conclusion of the Luke-Acts narrative (Acts 27:1-28:16). Mallen argues that, in these passages, Luke uses Isaiah to highlight themes of universal salvation, the reversal of fortune for the socially outcast, the servant mission of the Messiah, and the Messiah's designated witness.

Mallen uses source and redaction criticism to illustrate Isaiah's influence on these themes. He explores the use of Isaiah in the Synoptics to highlight the distinctive usage of Isaiah by Luke. Mallen does not appear very successful in showing that Luke is distinct from the Synoptic writers in his use of Isaiah 53. However, Mallen's other points are well made. Mallen concludes that Luke distinctively develops three theological concerns: 1.) universal salvation; 2.) the nature of Jesus' ministry; 3.) The mixed response to the message of salvation by the people of Israel.

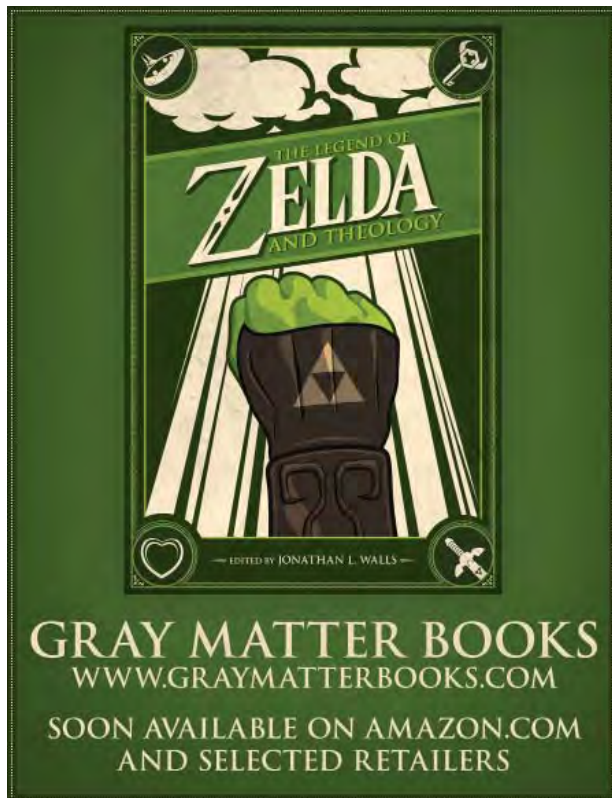
In light of how Luke develops these themes, Mallen concludes that Luke's reading of Isaiah is different from that of his Second Temple contemporaries. For Mallen, this difference is evidenced in Luke's universal scope, lack of nationalism, and the portrayal of Jesus' messianic mission. He argues that Luke found the Scriptural support for God's plan of salvation in Isaiah (203). According to Mallen, Luke calls his audience to hear the message of Isaiah anew in light of the things that have transpired with Jesus. He writes, "Luke's use of scripture is not static or backward-looking,

1 This book review was originally submitted on April 29, 2011 for Exegesis of Acts, taught by Professor Aida Besançon Spencer.

as in the writings of Josephus, but rather dynamic with ongoing relevance for the hearer, who is in effect invited to participate in the continuing purposes of God” (209).

Peter Mallen is to be commended for seeking to investigate the use of Isaiah in the Gospel of Luke and Acts. He successfully locates Luke in his Second Temple Jewish context, highlighting Luke’s distinctive style. Mallen illustrates how Luke’s use of Isaiah influences the narrative of Luke-Acts theologically and rhetorically. In addition, Mallen highlights the importance of Isaiah’s servant theme in Luke’s narrative. In *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*, Mallen does not spend much time dealing with questions about the historical Jesus or authentic traditions. It seems that in Mallen’s perspective, Luke has not created new traditions, but arranged those he received in order to highlight Isaiah. Mallen’s work is somewhat technical, so some students may feel overwhelmed by the density of information. Yet, for anyone interested in the use of the Old Testament in Luke-Acts, this is a helpful resource.

Christopher Williams (Th.M. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) is the Minister to Young Adults and Pastor-in-Residence at Concord Baptist Church in Boston, MA. He also serves as an Athanasius Scholar for Dr. William David Spencer at CUME. He has served as a New Testament Byington Scholar and a Greek Teaching Assistant at Gordon-Conwell’s South Hamilton campus. He is married to Marsharie Williams and they have one son, Athanasius Williams.



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Review of *Apocalyptic AI: Visions of Heaven in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality* by Robert M. Geraci
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)

PETER LEE

Apocalyptic AI is a pop science movement which has gained considerable attention, credibility and funding in the last century thanks in part to the imaginations of science fiction writers and the exponential growth in knowledge with particular regards to computer science and robotics. The term ‘apocalypse’ refers to the notion that, like Jewish and Christian understandings of a transcendent world yet to come, the technological prowess of humanity will soon provide a means for human beings to live robotically and/or virtually in a transcendent world complete with a transcendent body. The telos of humanity is thus a digital and virtual paradise of its own creation which is free from error, alienation, illness, and death.

Geraci begins his investigation by asserting that the aims of the Apocalyptic AI movement take their stance from Judeo-Christian theologies. AI apocalyptics understand the world to be dualistic in nature and thus “... apocalypticism is the desire to reconcile a cosmic dualism in which good and evil struggle against one another in the universe” (14). AI apocalyptics would thereby categorize good as immortal, supreme intelligence, and freedom from alienation while evil is understood to be all things related to humanity’s physiology and therefore finite bodies,¹ mortality, and all forms of societal and cultural oppression. It is Geraci’s understanding that there are many parallels between Judeo-Christian conceptions of the next world and the visions put forth by the Apocalyptic AI movement.

The premise of Apocalyptic AI relies upon Moore’s law of accelerating returns, later redefined by Ray Kurzweil. That is to say technological innovation and implementation will increase exponentially over time. That being said, the often lofty goals of the Apocalyptic AI movement are thus put into context because those participating insist that, though the technology does not yet exist to create a virtual paradise or robotic bodies, it very soon will, given the current trend of technological evolution. The apocalypse itself will occur in two stages. First will be the age of robots, whereby the human body will either be supplemented or completely replaced by machines that never get hurt, sick, or die. Strength, analytical skills, and enhanced sensory interactions will all accompany what AI apocalyptics call our soon to be “transcendent bodies.” Second will be the age of the mind. AI apocalyptics presume that the human consciousness can and soon will be separated from the body.² Consciousness is thought to be nothing more than a complicated pattern of neurological connections and electric impulses. Given expectant technologies based off of current technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging, it is therefore reasonable to expect that soon it will be possible to copy that pattern and essentially upload a consciousness into a digital reality. It is at this point that AI apocalyptics realize that human beings will have truly and fully transcended.³ Even the robotic bodies of the first age will count for naught because “in the age of mind all physical matter will become irrelevant” (35). In this virtual paradise, humanity will essentially live in a world of increasingly pure thought and exponentially expanding knowledge. In utilizing memories, it is thought that loved ones who have passed away could be virtually ‘resurrected’ to live once again among the living. All things considered “... immortality, resurrection of the dead, and the apotheosis of human kind allow transhumanism to replace traditional religions.” (103)

1 “The principle form of alienation in Apocalyptic AI is distaste for human finitude,” Geraci, *Apocalyptic AI*, 25.

2 “Consciousness is some kind of epiphenomenon that emerges from the brain’s interaction with the world; it has no causal powers and cannot even accurately describe the world,” *ibid.*, 110.

3 “As the Age of mind takes hold, it will collapse our traditional notion of time, ending history in its conventional sense,” *ibid.*, 35.

The Apocalyptic AI movement, as Geraci understands it, does not, however, concern itself only with visionary projections of the future: “Pop science educates the public so as to raise public interest in scientific research projects” (60). Geraci’s survey of Apocalyptic AI’s main proponents has lead him to understand that the movement is heavily geared towards establishing itself as a credible field of research, deserving of funding, and important to cultures here and abroad. What is interesting is that Geraci points out that this pop science movement draws on two fields for its authority: “Apocalyptic AI draws on the strengths of both religion and science; its religious promises grant us solace and hope while its scientific claims ground that hope in the successes of modern technology” (63). Thus, the movement as a whole is a hybrid, offering what it claims are genuine scientific opportunities for transcendence in knowledge, freedom from alienation, and immortality.⁴

Understanding Geraci’s investigation of the Apocalyptic AI movement from an Evangelical Christian perspective requires us to realize that large (and more importantly, incomplete) sweeping notions of Christian theology were implemented to provide a background to apocalypticism as a whole and served to illustrate points of contrast and similarity with the pop science movement. For instance, neither Geraci nor any of his noted sources mentions anything dealing with the Holy Family. Rather the Judeo-Christian understanding of God, as Geraci has it, is limited to the singular term “God.” In doing so, it becomes very easy for AI apocalyptics to refer simplistically to the notion that God will supposedly create a new and transcendent world filled with people in radically transcendent bodies without any mention of Jesus Christ or the atonement.

In addition to incomplete understandings of Christian theology, Geraci takes on a more liberal understanding (consistent with many scholars advocating the Documentary Hypothesis) on the authority of scriptures:

Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions grew out of the cultural mixture of ancient Israel’s prophetic (D.S. Russell 1964; Hanson [1975] 1979) and wisdom (von Rad 1965) traditions, the combat myths of ancient Mesopotamia (R. Clifford 2000), and writings from Greek and Persian cultures (J. Collins 2000b). Collectively, these sources found a home in the social landscape of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity, where disenfranchised Jews and Christians struggled to reconcile their political and social alienation with divine promises. (15)

Thus, the authority of scripture, though low, is not so much called into question as it is fondly and sentimentally thought to be the source (and a good one at that) of inspiration for AI Apocalyptics. When Geraci does refer back to ancient Near Eastern writings, many of his sources are books that are not canonical. These include the books of Esdras, Baruch, and Enoch. All in all the biblical canon is understood as a purely human-created body of literature that contained a number of good ideas that AI Apocalyptics have understood to be generally correct concerning the transcendent world to come, even if the details need to be reworked a bit.

One other point of reflection that deserves mention is Geraci’s understanding of Christian theological anthropology. The cosmic dualism and alienation that humanity subsequently suffers from leads to several unorthodox conclusions about the doctrine of man. Firstly, is the notion that all things physical and biological, the bodies with which God created humans, and the physical humanity Jesus Christ himself thought worth becoming, are all inherently categorized as bad, evil, or irrelevant in favor of transcendent bodies that human technological evolution will soon deliver. Secondly, the alienation to which Geraci and AI advocates attest is strictly limited to biological finitude (i.e. mortality and illness) or political/cultural oppression. There is no concern about

4 Consider a medieval Christian in his or her cathedral, with its paintings of heavenly realities and its power to reconcile humankind to the Christian God. Likewise, virtual worlds allow access to our true selves and to meaningful practices and communities, *ibid.*, 95.

spiritual realities concerning the sinfulness of human beings, the goodness of God, and the gulf in between, bridged by the atonement of Christ. Humanity is on the path of perfection rather than stuck below God unable to achieve salvation and entry into heaven on its own accord. Thirdly, arising out of the previous concerns is the fact that humanity has the ability to and in the future certainly will in a sense become gods and thereby replace any Judeo-Christian conception of God, if indeed there ever was a God.⁵

What is most striking in all of this is the understanding of what transcendence actually means and entails. Even in reflection on Judeo-Christian apocalypics, Geraci and others subtly hold to a self-centered, even selfish, conception of “heaven” in that the very purpose for humanity transcending in the first place is ultimately to continue to exist for humanity’s own sake. There seems to be no acknowledgement of the purpose of the kingdom of Heaven and the purpose humanity will have when that kingdom arrives in its totality, that being to worship the Lord forever and ever. Even more striking is the lack of knowledge of the invisibility and immaterial nature of God. Apocalyptic AI advocates say that, by achieving immortality, societal harmony, and supreme intelligence by uploading human consciousness into virtual realities, they will for all sakes and purposes become gods. Yet how real can that transcendence be if it is still based in the physical world? Presumably, the uploading of consciousnesses will take place into physical machines or at the very least humanity would then exist in some sort of energy form that still complies to the laws of physics. How real and substantive is that gained transcendence if all one would have to do is unplug it?⁶ This stands in stark contrast to Christian notions of God’s immaterial nature, His ability to sustain all creation by His will, and, should he so desire, simply stopping His sustaining of creation, He would effectively perform a vanishing act.

Geraci’s purpose throughout his work is fundamentally educational. He sees that the influence of science fiction writers like H.G. Wells and Isaac Asimov has resulted in dedicated TV channels filled with programming backed by hundreds of millions of dollars. The success of shows like *Battlestar Galactica*, the cinematic series *The Matrix*, or, as Geraci holds as his ultimate example, the video game *Second Life*, all point to the prevalence of science fiction and Apocalyptic AI in western culture as well as East Asian nations (specifically South Korea and Japan). Hence, the subject matter is reasonably important for Christians to be aware of, given not only the cultural importance of the movement but also the undeniable evolution of technology which has yet to fail Moore’s Law. Yet, it is when Christian theology is proclaimed as a source for this pop science movement or when specific points of doctrine are used to illustrate places of similarity or contrast, that it becomes apparent that few in the movement are literate in orthodox Christian doctrine. Familiar as Geraci is with the movement and those in it, further work on the interaction between theology and science in this specific field most definitely needs to be done. In the end, perhaps the greatest question that comes to mind at the conclusion of this study is this; how could perfection ever come forth from that which is not?

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5 “Jewish and Christian apocalypics rely upon God to establish the heavenly kingdom but, as we have seen, human beings carrying out the providential plan of evolution do so in Apocalyptic AI... Our ability to build a paradise and fulfill the age-old promises of religion elevates us to divine status...” *ibid.*, 102.

6 During my studies at Gordon-Conwell, I had the chance to study with Dr. John Jefferson Davis in the Spring of 2010. At the time, his remarks concerned digital realities with particular regards to social networking. How real can the presence of a person be if all that had to be done to end a video conference was suffer a typical New England blackout?

Review of *Defying Death: Zakaria Botross – Apostle to Islam* by Stuart Robinson with Peter Botross (Upper Mt Gravatt, Australia: CityHarvest Publications, 2008) and *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross: Insights from an Arab Christian* by Nabeel T. Jabbour (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008)

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Evangelical and evangelistic responses to Islam and Muslims in print and other media represent a vivid spectrum from the confrontational to the conciliatory. Among them, few are as combative as Father Zakaria Botross, and few as conciliatory as Nabeel T. Jabbour. Botross is a native Egyptian, now internationally at large. Jabbour was born in Syria, raised in Lebanon, and lived in Egypt for fifteen years before immigrating to the United States.

An elderly but vigorous former Coptic Priest, Botross may be “Islam’s Public Enemy #1,” one of the “most wanted” men in the Muslim world, yet many Americans have never heard of him.¹ Joel Rosenberg in *Inside the Revolution* portrays Botross as, “by far and away the most watched and most effective Arab evangelist operating in the Muslim world, and...the most controversial.” So controversial, that the bounty on his head may reach as high as sixty million dollars. “To put that in context, the U.S. bounty on Osama bin Laden’s head is \$25 million”²

Rosenberg does not cite a source for his estimate, but he reckons Botross reaches fifty million Muslims daily through satellite television and <http://www.fatherzakaria.net/>. This is despite or perhaps because of Botross’ inflammatory but carefully documented rhetoric utilizing Muslim sources and Islamic tradition to denounce the Muslim Prophet Muhammad as morally and spiritually repugnant, gratuitously violent, and sexually deviant.³ Botross defends his tactics:

If you go up to a Muslim and say, ‘God loves you,’ will he really hear you? No. He will say, ‘Which of your three gods loves me’...They (Muslims) are so focused on believing that Islam is the strongest religion in the world...that they refuse to even consider the claims of Christ...So I have to awaken them first by shock...I try to wake Muslims up by throwing some water in their face. I’m not doing it to be mean, I’m doing it because I love them.⁴

Unlike critics of Islam who focus exclusively or principally on politics or social issues, Botross’ first concern “is the salvation of souls. He often begins and concludes...by stating that he loves all Muslims as fellow humans and wants to steer them away from falsehood to Truth. To that end, he does not just expose troubling aspects of Islam. Before concluding every program, he quotes pertinent Bible verses and invites all his viewers to come to Christ.”⁵

In *Defying Death: Zakaria Botross - Apostle to Islam*, Stuart Robinson and Botross’ adult son Peter narrate Botross’ life story with photo inserts, a summary of Botross’ meticulous study of early Church Fathers, Botross’ hunger for fathoming depths of the Bible and applying what he finds in them to daily living, and Botross’ attempts at Christian discipleship in complex,

1 Cf. Raymond Ibrahim, “Islam’s ‘Public Enemy #1’: Coptic Priest Zakaria Botros (sic) Fights Fire with Fire,” *National Review Online* (March 25, 2008), <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/223965/islams-public-enemy-1/raymond-ibrahim>; Joel Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution: How the Followers of Jihad, Jefferson & Jesus Are Battling to Dominate the Middle East and Transform the World* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009).

2 Rosenberg, p. 407.

3 Raymond Ibrahim, “What Did You Say About Muhammad?!” *Pajama’s Media* (May 12, 2010), online at: <http://www.meforum.org/2650/what-did-you-say-about-muhammad>; Rosenberg, p. 408.

4 Botross, quoted in Rosenberg, p. 414.

5 Ibrahim, “Islam’s ‘Public Enemy #1.’”

complicated contexts. Robinson and Botross recount rebirth and renewal in Africa, America, Australia, and Europe; imprisonment and escape from Egypt's notoriously brutal penal system; a marriage proposal to a woman Botross had never met; Christian ministry, educational endeavors, entrepreneurship, evangelism, and social service in Muslim majority Egypt and beyond.

Further summarizing *Defying Death* might rob readers of a richer experience of discovery. Suffice it to say that Botross is a contemporary exemplar of Acts 17:6, where Christians in Thessalonica were notoriously denounced as, "These who have turned the world upside down!" I concur with Abu Daoud that *Defying Death*, "is a valuable contribution—the first biography to date written on a very influential man. In years to come we should expect additional material...(a) more exhaustive, academic biography. But given that the story of Abuna Zakaria Botros (sic?) is continuing today, let us not be in a hurry."⁶

Like Botross, Nabeel T. Jabbour loves Muslims, but his philosophy and his methods decisively differ. Jabbour earned a Th.D. in Islamics from the University of South Africa. He has so far penned three Arabic and four English books. His English titles are *The Rumbling Volcano: Islamic Fundamentalism in Egypt* (William Carey Library, 1993), *The Unseen Reality: A Panoramic View of Spiritual Warfare* (NavPress, 1995, available gratis in PDF format at www.nabeeljabbour.com), and *Unshackled and Growing: Muslims and Christians on the Journey to Freedom* (Dawson Media, 2007). *The Crescent through the Eyes of the Cross* is Jabbour's latest and perhaps most theologically sophisticated. Jabbour helps Christians see through Muslim eyes what Robert Burns yearned for in his classic poem, "To a Louse."

O would some Pow'r the gift to give us
To see ourselves as others see us!
It 'would from many a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress and gait would leave us
And even (misconstrued?) devotion!⁷

But Jabbour is not content to let Christians see themselves or merely *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* in Amin Maalouf's forthright phrase.⁸ Jabbour conveys multiple Muslim and Middle Eastern perspectives via vibrant vignettes depicting the Bible, *Qur'an*, eschatology, (neo)colonialism, Israel/Palestine, modesty, gender garb, "Western" morality, and the siren songs of fundamentalism, fanaticism, and militancy. Jabbour describes the nuances between fundamentalists, militants, and fanatics. Not all militants are fundamentalist, he states. Not all fundamentalists are fanatics exhibiting "*an attitude of hate and self-righteousness*" (83). Some fundamentalists sincerely, if misguidedly, seek to serve God though fidelity to stricter, more austere variations of Islam.

Jabbour refuses to malign Islam and also discourages others from doing so. He spotlights Christian-Muslim commonalities, highlights wisdom in the *Qur'an* and other Islamic sources, supports progressive interpretations of the *Qur'an*, and suggests ways Christians and Muslims can learn from and empathize with each other. Jabbour alludes to Acts 10, "God could have easily given Cornelius the full message...to hear through the angel. Instead, God wanted Peter to get involved and in the process become *transformed*. Peter could have...(become) an ethnocentric Jew if he hadn't gotten the exposure to the Gentiles that God desired for him" (96). Surely, God desires to transform people similarly through Christian-Muslim encounters today.

Notwithstanding two thousand years of Christianity in North Africa and the Middle East,

⁶ Abu Daoud, "Observations on Abuna Zakaria Botros (And a Book Review)," *St. Francis Magazine* 5:5 (October, 2009), p. 98.

⁷ Updated here from Robert Burns (Lowland Scots, 1786), *Poems and Songs* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1991), p. 40.

⁸ Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984).

Jabbour writes that Christians are often perceived as outlandish and isolationist by Muslims. He provocatively probes Scripture for how Christians should (and should not) imitate ancient Israel:

How were the people of God (the Israelites in Exodus) perceived by the Egyptians?... It seems that even after hundreds of years of living in Egypt, they were still viewed as foreigners. It was suspected that their loyalty to some future enemy would be stronger than their loyalty to the country that adopted them...In contrast, the people of God in Babylon (when Israel was in exile) went in a completely different direction and were a blessing to the nations. (131)

Jabbour senses echoes of the Gospel within Egyptian culture and Islam itself, but his sympathy for Muslim wisdom and opinion does not lead him to forsake the Gospel, but to celebrate it as “the *most fantastic...news...people desperately need to hear and know*, not only on the cognitive level but experientially as well. It has to do with the facts that God is present with us despite all appearances, and God reigns and will triumph despite all appearances. These truths were revealed in *Jesus Christ* and in the *place of belongingness* that He offers” (92). But Christians must distinguish Jesus and his “core” message from the nonessential cultural/religious “wrappings” of assorted languages, customs, worship styles, and theological trends (91-97).

How does Jabbour address troubling *Qur’anic* passages such as Surah Al-Anfal 9? He appeals to Muslim interpreters like Mahmoud Taha and Taha’s disciple, Emory University Muslim legal scholar Abdullah A. Na’im. Taha postulates a remedy to the dilemma of the *Qur’an* extending tolerance to Jews and Christians in chronologically earlier Surahs from the “Meccan period” and before the Battle of Badr in the “Medinan period” (e.g. 2:256 and 109:1-6), in contrast with chronologically later Medinan Surahs calling for warfare with “pagans” and the subjugation, conversion, or killing of Jews and Christians. Jabbour follows Taha to solve the chronology conundrum by reversing the order of interpretive priority:

According to Taha, because Muhammad’s message (earlier in Mecca) was pure and the people were not ready for it, he was harassed and persecuted...(Later, in Medina) Muhammad was given a diluted message to give to the people because they were not ready for the supreme message due to the hardness of their hearts...Taha perceived the supreme message was equivalent to...the Sermon on the Mount...Muslims should go back to the supreme message, the message that was given to Muhammad in Mecca...the Meccan Surahs should be given more weight...The supreme message focused on God and His attributes, on tolerance, and on caring for widows and orphans, while the diluted message that was given later...included intolerance and militancy. (106-107)

Jabbour also quotes Na’im, who is worth repeating here:

Unless the basis of modern Islamic law is shifted away from those texts of the Qu’ran and Sunna of the Medina stage, which constituted the foundations of...Shari’a, there is no way of avoiding drastic and serious violation of universal standards of human rights...in relation to constitutionalism, criminal justice, and international law, the traditional techniques of reform within the framework of Shar’ia are inadequate for achieving the necessary degree of reform. To achieve that degree...we must be able to set aside clear and definite texts of the Qur’an and Sunna of the Medina stage as having served their transitional purpose and implement those texts of the Meccan stage which were...(in Medina) inappropriate...but are now the only way to proceed. (107-108, 255)

Who embodies a more faithful Christian response to Islam and Muslims: Botross (love Muslims, fight Islam) or Jabbour (love Muslims, respect and commend aspects of Islam)? Both

have supporters and likeminded colleagues among Evangelicals and other Christians. Egyptian convert to Christianity Nonie Darwish in her *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) and missionary Don Richardson in *Secrets of the Qur'an* (Regal, 2003) are confrontational like Botross, though Darwish blends criticism and conciliation in *Now They Call Me Infidel* (Sentinel, 2006), as does another Egyptian convert to Christianity, Mark Gabriel in books such as *Islam and the Jews* (Strang, 2003), *Jesus and Muhammad* (Strang, 2004), and *Journey into the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist* (Strang, 2006). Almost completely conciliatory are Fouad Elias Accad in *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (NavPress, 1997), Christine A. Mallouhi in *Waging Peace on Islam* (InterVarsity, 2000), Mike Kuhn in *Fresh Vision for the Muslim World* (Authentic, 2009), Carl Medearis in *Muslims, Christians, and Jesus* (Bethany House, 2008), *Tea with Hezbollah* (with Ted Dekker, Doubleday, 2010), and *Speaking of Jesus* (David C. Cook, 2011). These conciliators demonstrate significant sympathy with Muslim religious and political concerns, focus on non-confrontational caring relationships, and gently testify about Jesus.

Fellow readers may disagree, but I believe both Botross and Jabbour might faithfully fulfill God's call in ways resistant to caricatures like "good cop, bad cop" or "carrot and stick" that imply manipulation rather than the authenticity and genuine engagement personified by both perspectives. At the very least, both can inform discussions by providing earnest, pensive perspectives for and within the Body of Christ (cf. Prov. 11:14, 15:22, 24:6, 27:17). To modify Ephesians 4:11, "God calls some to be prophets (chiefly confrontational), others evangelists (primarily proclaimers), still others to be pastors (devoted discerners of common ground?), and others to be teachers (examiners, reporters, and equippers) building up God's people for every good work.

Confrontational critics and tender-hearted conciliators can both labor in God's harvest field if they work "as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23) for the glory of God and the refreshment of the human spirit.⁹ Three challenges for every laborer are: 1) discerning where and when particular emphases or actions are best (if ever) appropriate; 2) fervor for truth, eschewing the twin errors of dishonest defamation or deceptive defense of Islam or Muslims, as well as of Christians and Christianity; 3) aiming to conform every thought, word, and deed to the example of Christ, who lived a life of love as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Eph. 5:1-2).

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9 Cf. "Recreation" in Wilibald Gurlitt, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Master and His Work* (MA: De Capo Press, 1986), 67. Cf. The *Bhagavad Gita* 10:10, 11:55, 18:65; The *Bible*: Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27; 1 Cor. 10:31; The *Qur'an*: Surah 2:177; "The Westminster Shorter Catechism" (1647), A:1; John Piper, *Desiring God* (OR: Multnomah, 1986, 1996, 2003).